



The ADVENTURES
OF
COUNT O'CONNOR

HENRY STACE



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THE ADVENTURES OF COUNT O'CONNOR

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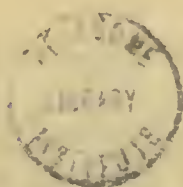
IN THE DOMINIONS OF
THE GREAT MOGUL

EDITED BY
HENRY STACE



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O. T. P.
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INTRODUCTION.

THE present volume contains only a portion of the Memoirs which the famous Count O'Connor left behind him for publication. Since it does not include the history of the first part of his wanderings, wherein he gives an account of his parentage, it is necessary to state briefly who he was, and how it chanced that his Memoirs are only now given to the public, two hundred years after they were written.

Nicholas O'Connor was born in the year 1635, the only son of a worthy gentleman of Connaught, more remarkable for ancient lineage than for the extent or value of his property. This good man died when the future Count was only ten years old. The lad left his home at an early age, and at twenty-one he had already engaged in several campaigns, and gained some distinction. During the next fifteen years he wandered all over Europe, offering his sword and his services to anyone who would hire them. From the constant references to his name which appear in contemporary records, it seems that he became a very well-known figure at most of the minor Courts; though, if he had a reputation for bravery, it is clear that his weaknesses, of which he was quite unconscious, were equally notorious.

He was in his thirty-fourth year when he started on that remarkable journey to the East which forms

the subject of the present volume. After spending about a year and a half in the dominions of the Great Mogul, he set out again for Europe, carrying with him a large fortune in precious stones. But he did not succeed in reaching his native country without some further adventures, for he was seized by Moorish pirates, and passed several years in their hands as a slave before he could regain his liberty and return to Europe. But at last he arrived in Ireland, accompanied by a black servant, who was passionately attached to him; and having contrived to preserve his jewels during his captivity, and being now past his fortieth year, he determined to settle down. He added largely to his estates, and built a fine mansion, which is still standing; and after several courtships, he espoused the daughter of a local squireen, and by her had a large family. He lived to a good age, despite his early extravagances, and died in the year 1708, being then seventy-four years old.

He left behind him a great mass of papers, which contained an account of the first forty years of his life. He evidently intended to publish his Memoirs himself, but he began them too late. The first page bears the date 1705, and the work was only completed a few weeks before his last illness. His heirs, after examining the Memoirs, not unnaturally decided to suppress them, for although the gallant Count himself evidently had no idea of the fact, it will be apparent to all readers that, even by his own account, his character was very imperfect. But lapse of time has weakened that objection, and the present representatives of the family see no reason why there should be any further concealment about

the adventures of one who can only appear to modern readers as a fictitious personage. They have therefore handed over the documents to the present editor, with full liberty to deal with them as he shall think fit.

The Memoirs, which are of great volume, fall naturally into three portions, dealing respectively with his adventures in Europe, in the dominions of the Great Mogul, and as a slave in the hands of the Moors. In the first portion he speaks of himself as plain Nicholas O'Connor; and although in the later portions he calls himself Count, it does not appear that he had any right to the title. As he does not state how or when it was conferred upon him, it seems probable that he assumed it in order to gratify his own vanity.

The first portion of the Memoirs, dealing with his European adventures, is not altogether suitable for publication, as it consists largely of scandalous stories of the love affairs in which he was constantly engaged; but the later portions are free from this objection. By the time he undertook his famous journey to the East, he had grown more sober and circumspect. The second portion is here presented, being selected for publication partly because it is the most amusing, and partly because it deals with a country of which, at that period of its history, little is popularly known.

THE ADVENTURES OF COUNT O'CONNOR.

CHAPTER I.

I GO TO THE INDIES, BECOME A PHYSICIAN, AND PERFORM THREE
MIRACULOUS CURES.

THOSE persons who have read the account of my exploits in the various countries of Europe will remember that none of my adventures had hitherto brought me any increase of fortune. Indeed, at the age of thirty-five, I found myself in possession of a reputation for courage and address unrivalled throughout Europe, with a frame toughened by every kind of hardship and privation, but with a fortune ill-fitted to maintain the position to which my parts entitled me. In this situation, I bethought me that it was time for me to acquire some wealth, of which I had hitherto been too careless; indeed, I considered it a duty to the noble race from which I am sprung that I should obtain the means of supporting that brilliant state which my natural endowments would enable me to adorn. Feeling that little was to be looked for in those countries of Europe against whose enemies I had so often fought, and whose soil I had so generously bedyed with the princely blood of the O'Connors, I cast about for some fresh locality in which I might hope that success would reward my endeavours.

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It fell out, about the time I write of, that two travellers, named Bernier and Tavernier, had returned from the East Indies, of whom one was a physician and the other a merchant. These men had favoured the public with the most astounding tales of the wealth and magnificence of the sovereign known as the Great Mogul; of the wars in which he was constantly engaged; and of the strange appearance and customs of the inhabitants of that barbarous country. The travellers, though not persons of distinguished lineage, had been honourably received by the Mogul Emperor, and it was generally believed that they had amassed great wealth in his service.

These accounts naturally led me to consider the propriety of journeying to those lands myself, and a very little reflection convinced me of the advantages of such an undertaking. These men, who had been so successful in the Indies, were persons of no rank. If they had acquired fortune in the East, what might not I anticipate, being a gentleman of noble race and a soldier of renown? If some of the kings and princes of Europe had been glad to avail themselves of my services, would not these be even more useful to a savage potentate? These were powerful inducements, and I must not forget to add that to a man of my courageous disposition the prospect of strange adventures and desperate affrays was more attractive than the temptations of wealth.

In short, I very soon became so hot upon the undertaking that I could brook no delay. I therefore realised all my property, which brought me no great sum, faithfully discharged my obligations, as

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has ever been my wont, and, all my preparations being complete, set out upon my adventurous journey.

The account of my voyages before arriving in the Indies would in itself be sufficiently entertaining, but I am obliged to omit all such matters, or I should never be done. I shall do no more than remark that I endured the most incredible hardships, both by land and sea; I was twice in peril of being wrecked in storms, and on one of these occasions my life was only preserved by the readiness with which I took the place of the captain, who was overwhelmed with terror, and retained command of the vessel until the danger was over. After these and other adventures, having passed several months on the journey, I finally set foot in the great port of the Indies called Surat, where both the Portuguese and the English have established factories and trading posts.

I had originally intended to offer my services to the Emperor Aurungzebe as a soldier, and, considering that it would be advantageous to possess a knowledge of the language spoken at the Mogul's Court, I remained at Surat for three months, studying with a Portuguese priest. At the end of this time I was able to converse readily in the lingo, and was about setting out when I heard news of the Great Mogul which induced me to alter my plans. It chanced that the Conqueror of the World, as this Prince boastfully calls himself, was at this time suffering from an obdurate fever, which had brought him to the point of death, and had hitherto baffled the skill of all his physicians. The merchants and others who live in those parts expressed the liveliest

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concern, for it was remembered that Aurungzebe had only raised himself to the throne after the murder of his brothers and the confinement of his aged father. He had, moreover, imprisoned his own sons, lest they should conspire against him; and it was feared that on his own death bloody wars for the succession would break out, and that, as at the commencement of his reign, the country would once more be given over to rapine and violence. In these circumstances it was of the highest importance that his life should be preserved.

The Emperor himself had caused it to be made known that any physician, or hakim, who should succeed in curing his malady would receive a reward of one hundred thousand rupees, or, as they say, a lac. But, notwithstanding this magnificent offer, all attempts had hitherto been unsuccessful. It seemed little likely that anyone would succeed, and many people were already declaring themselves supporters of this or that son of the Emperor as the successor to his father's throne.

It might be supposed that the news of the Emperor's offer would not concern me, and that I should be more likely to find opportunities for advancing my fortunes in the wars which everyone expected would soon break out. But a little reflection made me think differently. There were several Princes, each with numerous supporters, and I knew not whose cause to espouse. It would profit me little if I should have the ill-fortune to declare in favour of a Prince who was destined to defeat, and I had no means of ensuring against such a misfortune. It is true that the prospect of fighting, of finding opportunities for the display of my qualities

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of courage and resource was alluring to me ; but I had no intention of throwing away these qualities upon an enterprise which was doomed to failure, for it must be recollected that I had come to the Indies, not for the gratification of my own tastes, but in order to fulfil the duty which I owed to my family of exalting the name and fortunes of the O'Connors.

These considerations induced me to turn my thoughts to the Emperor's offer. Here, indeed, was a task which might well have dismayed a skilled physician ; and it would seem that where the hakims and learned men had failed it were madness in a simple soldier to attempt a cure. But throughout my career I have constantly observed that Fortune smiles upon those who merit her favours ; and in this instance, as in so many others, my own good luck did not desert me, for it chanced that, in addition to the rough surgical knowledge which I had gathered in my campaigns, I possessed a small quantity of a secret drug, very powerful in subduing fevers and expelling evil humours from the blood. I had on one occasion been afflicted with a stubborn fever, and Providence having directed that a good friar should become aware of my evil case, the holy man came to me as I lay upon a bed of sickness and administered to me this drug, of which his Order alone possessed the knowledge. The effect was so immediate that on my recovery I importuned him to acquaint me with the secret of its preparation. To this he would in no wise consent. Finding him immovable, I took the opportunity, after closely examining my conscience, of possessing myself of a small quantity of the drug while the good friar was sleeping, removing it with a light heart

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from the purse which he always carried about him, and justifying my action by the thought of the relief which I should be enabled to bring to other sufferers.

I now had reason to be thankful for my foresight. If my benevolent efforts on the Emperor's behalf should succeed, my fortune would be secured : whereas in the event of failure, the Princes would have no ground for resenting my attempts to cure the Emperor, whose recovery every consideration of filial affection and piety must make them desire. Nay, they might even suppose that my treatment had hastened the event which opened the way for one of them to mount the throne ; and if they should entertain so ill-judged an idea, it would not become me to interfere with the efforts of Fortune on my behalf by correcting the misapprehension. I also considered that in the event of the Emperor's demise, my position at Court would enable me to form a juster opinion as to whose cause it would be expedient to adopt. I did not overlook the possibility that if the Great Mogul should expire after my treatment, I might be in some immediate danger ; but I determined to rely, as I have often done before, upon my ready wit to help me out of my difficulty.

I therefore set about making my preparations. I called to mind that the good friar had told me that the action of his remedy was greatly assisted by administering heating substances to the sick person, as in this way a perspiration is induced which drives the poison out of the body. I therefore compounded a preparation of all the most ardent substances I could come at. The mixture included a large amount of the yellow pepper that comes from the

country of Nepalle, which is so powerful that a single grain of it, placed upon the tongue, is sufficient to cause a burning sensation in the mouth. I was not so rash as to suppose that I could safely administer the mixture to the Emperor without reducing its power, for I understood that he was likely to make me pay dearly for any inconvenience I might cause him. I therefore determined that I would mix it with a sufficient quantity of warm water to remove its disagreeable effects.

I engaged a number of Indians to accompany me upon my journey, and render me the necessary services; and having laid out the most of my money in the purchase of supplies, I set forth into the trackless deserts of Indoustan. What I suffered in those dreadful regions from the ardent heats, from the myriad insects which tormented me, from fatigue, and from constant peril from the serpents and the ferocious animals which swarm in the horrid waste, I am not disposed to relate. I am accustomed to hardships, and can endure them without complaint.

But when I had traversed a great portion of my way, a more serious misfortune befell me, and one which was like to have undone me. For having come to a region where neither food nor supplies of any kind could be obtained, my servants basely deserted me by night, taking with them everything that I possessed, and leaving me thus stript of my means of support in the midst of a savage and inhospitable land. By good fortune the noise of their departure aroused me, and going to see what was the cause of the disturbance, I discovered that one of them had for some reason remained behind, though I am persuaded that he would have followed them if

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I had not caught him. I therefore inflicted upon him a hearty beating, and, forcing him to his knees, pointed out the wickedness of such a return for my indulgence, and assured him that if he should attempt to desert me, I would pursue and slay him, rather than suffer him to escape. With tears in his eyes, the miserable wretch protested that he was fully sensible that he had in me the kindest of masters, and that nothing would induce him to leave my service while life remained to him. With this I was obliged to be content; and after that, I confess, the fellow, whose name was Nathoo, served me faithfully.

I now pushed on in the hope of finding a more fertile region. To my former sufferings were now added the pangs of hunger, and I was often in the greatest straits. At times I was forced to satisfy the needs of my belly by appealing to the compassion of the heathen. In this miserable fashion I continued my journey, ever on the alert for an opportunity of adding to my reputation and to the contents of my purse; and I now discovered that the greatness of the former compensated but ill for the leanness of the latter.

I am not ashamed to confess that at times I was pushed so hard that I was obliged to seize the headman of some small and lonely village, and hold him in bondage, and even to inflict upon him sundry pains and discomforts with the object of inducing him to relieve my distress, and provide me with the means of continuing my journey. Such necessities will arise at times, but to dwell upon them is disagreeable to a man of spirit. I hold, indeed, that a Divine Providence has mercifully created these

heathen the natural inferiors of Christian peoples, and it cannot be pretended that a gentleman of reputation is to perish of hunger while the idolaters are living in plenty. These reflections convinced me that in obliging them to deliver to me some portion of their superfluity, I was but the humble instrument of Providence; and the uprightness of my purpose enabled me to overcome very easily the shrinkings which were prompted by the softness of my heart.

Owing to my unmerited misfortunes, it was in a sorry condition that I arrived at length before the Imperial city of Agra, after a series of hardships and adventures such as would have crushed any man of less determined spirit. I was sensible that my ragged and travel-stained attire, and my retinue shrunken to one miserable servant, must seriously diminish my credit; but seeing no help for it, I resolved to put a bold face upon the matter. On entering the city I gave out that I was a Frankish physician of note, who had travelled from a vast distance to cure the Emperor Aurungzebe; and such was the consternation prevailing in the city, and the dread of the disturbances which would break out upon his demise, that I was welcomed with every mark of respect. An officer of the city guard took upon himself the task of conducting me to the great red stone fort, within which lies the Imperial palace; and great numbers of the populace assembled to gaze upon me, and followed behind, so that the lack of a retinue befitting my condition was concealed by the greatness of the crowd which accompanied me. Now I was minded to put my remedy to the test before applying it to the sacred person of

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the Emperor, and my good fortune, which seemed before to have deserted me, returned, and threw in my way a chance which I did not neglect. The officer who led the way approached me with an air of humility, and after some flattering remarks designed to secure my good-will, he intimated that his son lay sick of a fever at no great distance, and, imploring me to pardon his presumption, desired that I would deign to exercise my skill on his behalf.

Nothing could have been more fortunate, and I instantly determined to grant the officer's request. Assuming an air of condescension, I therefore directed that a halt should be made, and the sick man brought before me. The officer, who discovered the greatest delight, thereupon led me to the shade of a great tree by the wayside, where I dismounted. A carpet and some pillows were ravished from the neighbouring stall of a merchant, and spread out for me; and I seated myself, and calling Nathoo, directed him to open my little case of drugs, which by good fortune had escaped the notice of the robbers. I proposed to use my remedy in its full strength, that I might the better judge of its potency and the degree of discomfort attending its use, and I therefore poured out a measure of my peppery compound, and in it dissolved a small pinch of the friar's drug.

In a short space of time the sick man was brought before me, lying helpless upon a string bed. It needed small skill to perceive that he was suffering from the common fever of the country, or bokhar, to which these heathen are peculiarly subject. His skin was parched and dry, his lips shrivelled, and his eyes extraordinarily bright and glittering.

I directed that he should be supported in a sitting posture, and, taking the vessel containing the medicine, I advanced towards the sufferer, and while the father held his son's jaws apart, I poured it down his throat. I then stepped back and pronounced in a solemn tone certain cabalistic words which I had prepared for the occasion. One outstretched hand I pointed at the sick man, and the other I raised towards the heavens, remaining in this attitude until he began to feel the effects of the draught.

I need not conceal the fact that I was extremely ill at ease, though none could have suspected that the dignity of my mien concealed aught but supreme confidence. The remedy took hold of the unfortunate man almost immediately. The tears started from his eyes, and as the burning sensation increased he became endowed with unexpected strength. He who a moment ago had lain helpless in the hands of his attendants, unable to support the weight of his own body, now struggled with maniacal vigour to escape. He writhed, and threw himself from side to side, vainly trying to throw off the hands which held him down. On my part, I kept up an unceasing flow of incantations, raising my voice with the increasing violence of his paroxysms, until I verily believe that the onlookers supposed that he writhed and twisted in obedience to the magic words I uttered.

I have constantly observed that the common folk of all nations judge the efficacy of a remedy by the violence of its action, and it was no surprise to me to find that these poor ignorant heathens looked on the matter in the same light. The more the sick

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man groaned and shrieked, the greater grew the admiration of the beholders. Cries of "Wah! Wah!" and "Shabash!" indicating the extreme of astonishment and respect, were heard on all sides. The people crowded around to watch the patient's struggles, and when the popular excitement was at its height, the father, who had been watching his son eagerly, gave voice suddenly in a shriek of exultation. "Behold!" he cried, with the utmost excitement, "He sweats! He sweats! The fever is broken! Blessings on the great hakim, the divine healer! My son will live! O mighty physician, I am thy dog; all that I possess is thine!" And he cast himself upon the ground at my feet, abasing his head into the very dust.

For my part, I experienced that delightful satisfaction which the performance of a good action ever brings to the doer. My heart was softened towards this youth, whose life I had saved, and the father to whom I had preserved a beloved child. I spoke to the happy parent in a voice shaken with emotion, and bade him rise, adding that I was sufficiently rewarded by the knowledge that the young man was restored to life. At this proof of my generosity the officer burst into tears, while cries of admiration resounded on all sides.

Maintaining an aspect of dignified indifference, as though the plaudits of the multitude had no power to move me, I directed that the youth should be taken to his home, and well cared for; and I then remounted my horse, and requested the officer to lead on. It was thus with a secure reputation for miraculous skill and for benevolence of character that I resumed my march to the palace, preceded

and followed by a constantly growing crowd of admirers.

The noise of the throng was so great that as we approached the fortress an officer of the Imperial household came forth to learn the cause of the tumult. This person no sooner heard the account of my achievement than he forced his way through the crowd, and greeted me with the utmost respect. He assured me that I came at a fortunate moment, since the Emperor's malady had reached a pitch at which his own physicians were powerless to deal with it, and unless relief should come quickly the Great Mogul would certainly die. He undertook to bring me into the palace without delay; and he did not forget to inform me that his name was Mirza Khan, and that in the event of my proving successful he trusted that I would not forget that it was through his agency that I had been enabled to apply my skill.

In reply, I assured him of my protection, and added that I was possessed of a remedy which had never been known to fail, and would, I doubted not, immediately restore the Conqueror of the World to health. In accordance with my usual practice, I addressed him with an air of condescension; for I have ever found that the rude and ignorant are more powerfully impressed by a masterful demeanour than by the most extraordinary merits.

At the entrance to the fort the crowd was driven back, and I went forward accompanied only by Mirza Khan, my man Nathoo, and the officer whose son I had restored to health. It was evident that the noise of my coming had preceded me, for the various guards at the entrance to the fort and

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palace admitted me without question. I was hurried into the palace, through some intricate corridors, and finally left in an ante-room with my man, while Mirza Khan and the officer went into the Presence, to announce me, and to relate the extraordinary feat I had already accomplished.

I could not altogether quiet some uneasy reflections when I was thus left alone. The trial I had made on the person of the officer's son had shown me that my remedy was effective; but I was discreet enough to know that I must not inflict upon the Emperor the tortures which the other sick man had endured. Moreover, I was really ignorant of the nature of the Mogul's disease, save that it was some kind of fever, while my medical knowledge extended no further than a belief that in treating fevers the one necessary thing was to induce the sufferer to sweat. Despite the success of my first experiment, I could not reflect without uneasiness on the effect which my remedy might have upon the Ornament of the Throne.

I was not left long in suspense, for Mirza Khan reappeared with a dignified, white-bearded old man, who announced himself as the Emperor's chief physician. This personage proceeded to question me closely as to the nature of the remedy I was to employ, but finding me mum on that point, he tried to draw me into a discussion on the nature of the Emperor's malady, using so many learned expressions that I saw that I must inevitably betray myself if I should attempt to answer him. I therefore pleaded ignorance of his language, save in so far as to enable me to converse upon ordinary topics, and the hakim was forced to abandon his inquisition. I

conceived that it would be politic to gain the favour of a personage of so much influence as the principal hakim, and I therefore took care to make some flattering remarks, which he received very graciously; and he then asked me if I was prepared to appear before the Emperor at once. I replied that I was, whereupon he directed me to follow him, and led the way through a screened doorway into a narrow passage, and beyond that into a great chamber where the Emperor lay.

It was a room of white marble, magnificently ornamented with carved stonework, in which the Indians are very proficient. I had no time to observe my surroundings, however, for I was hurried forward to where, on a heap of gorgeous cushions and rugs, the Conqueror of the World reclined. Around him stood a number of personages, whom I afterwards found to be the great Omrahs, or noblemen, attached to the Court.

This great Prince had a countenance expressive of the most subtle enlightenment. His complexion was of a sallow tint, no darker than that of the races of Southern Europe. His eyes were large and prominent, and shaded by heavy lids. He had a long nose, drooping at the point like that of a Jew. His upper lip was short, twisted slightly upwards at one side, so as to impart to his countenance an expression of disdain. His chin, which was large and firm, was covered with a thin, black beard. At this moment he appeared to be much wasted by his complaint; his skin was dry and burning, and the whites of his eyes were dull.

My conductor made a number of profound obeisances as we approached, an example which I was

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careful to follow. The royal sufferer cut short the long-winded introduction of the hakim with the impatience of a sick man, and addressed me in a harsh voice.

“ Who are you ? ” he said.

“ Your Majesty,” I replied, “ I am a Frankish physician, and I believe I may say that my reputation——”

He interrupted me with an abruptness which I attributed to his distressing situation. “ Can you cure me ? ” he asked.

“ I believe that, with the assistance of Allah, I shall be able to do so,” I replied. “ If your Highness will allow——”

“ Why have you come to my dominions ? ” he asked, interrupting me again.

“ Your Majesty,” I replied, “ you will not be surprised to learn that your fame extends even to the distant land from which I am come. Hearing of your malady, I——”

Although I was desirous of making a good impression on him, by the justice of the sentiments I intended to express, he would not allow me to finish what I had to say. “ Enough,” he cried, with a wry look ; “ you come to serve your own ends. You know the conditions ? If you cure me, a hundred thousand rupees. If you fail, as many of a hundred thousand strokes upon the soles of the feet as you shall live to receive.”

I had heard nothing of this, and I could not but feel disquieted. However, having come so far, I would not draw back ; and feeling certain that, even if I should fail, I could devise some way out of the difficulty, I assented. Thereupon the Emperor,

who could scarcely control the impatience which his malady occasioned him, ordered me to proceed without further delay.

Although I was inwardly trembling, I showed no outward signs of my uneasiness. I looked grave and learned, pulled my beard, and, having asked permission, fingered the Emperor's pulse and examined his tongue, nodding my head at the same time, and looking well pleased, as though I had discovered what I expected.

I now asked for warm water, and when it was brought, I made as strong a mixture as I dared. Nothing may pass the Emperor's lips until it has first been tasted by a slave, whose duty it is thus to interpose his own person between his sovereign and the risk of poison. When this ceremony had been performed, and some minutes allowed to elapse in order to watch the effect upon the fellow—who appeared to derive considerable satisfaction from the warming sensation which the drug produced—the Emperor signified that he was willing to receive the dose. Thereupon the chief hakim, who had no desire to remain in the background, took the cup from me, and going forward, offered it to the Emperor, saying as he did so, "In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful." Aurungzebe received it in his hand, and before drinking it, directed a searching glance at me.

"Shall I drink, Frank?" he asked with a wry smile. "Reflect: if it should harm me your fate will be such that perhaps you will long in vain for a draught of the same poison to end your agonies. Shall I drink?"

"Drink, Conqueror of the World," I replied,

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folding my arms, and returning his gaze with an unmoved countenance.

Without more hesitation he raised the cup to his lips, and drained it; and immediately afterwards he lay back upon the cushions again. Those present gazed at the recumbent Prince, and dead silence prevailed. For my part, I confess that my heart seemed to stand still, and I became cold from head to foot with dread. The time went by, and still the silence was unbroken. Presently the Emperor raised his head quickly, and gazed at me uneasily. He seemed about to speak, but said nothing, and lay down again. I will not deny that this moment, when I feared he was about to denounce me, was one of the most terrible in my life.

Many minutes had passed when suddenly the hakim, who had been bending over his royal master, stood erect and spoke in a loud voice. "Praise be to Allah!" he cried. "The blessed dew break out on the sacred body of the Ornament of the Throne. Behold, for the first time since the fever took him, the Emperor sweats! Praise be to Allah!"

Cries of satisfaction broke out on all sides. The hakim now directed that rugs should be heaped upon the royal person, to increase the perspiration. Another period of watching followed, until at length, to my joy, he announced in a low tone that the Emperor was sleeping. It was not until I had assured myself of this that I was able to feel easy. But when I saw that he was indeed asleep, and perceived a healthy moisture upon his brow, I allowed myself to believe that, so far as it had gone, the cure had succeeded.

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Not to be too particular, I shall merely relate that the treatment was continued for three days, during which I was lodged in the palace and closely guarded. I administered the secret drug myself, three times each day, being unwilling to let it out of my hands; but I paid the chief hakim the compliment of desiring him to take the care of the Emperor into his own hands, declaring that no one could possibly perform this service as well as himself. This stratagem was designed to secure the good-will of the hakim, and, at the same time, to conceal my own ignorance. Our joint efforts were so successful that after the third day the frequent sweats had purged the Emperor's blood of its evil humours, and it was publicly announced that he was cured of his fever, though still weak from its effects.

I fell into a transport of joy at the news. Now that the danger was over I could not restrain my astonishment and admiration at the courage which had enabled me to undertake so desperate an adventure. Once more, I reflected, my bravery has extricated me from the unmerited misfortunes which Fate had showered upon me. Thus we see clearly that a gallant soldier ought never to despair; his own merits will win for him that which Fate has denied him. By my resource and daring, I had cast behind me for ever the troubles which had of late afflicted me, and raised myself once more to that exalted station to which my birth and my parts alike entitled me.

Upon the fifth day the Emperor commanded me to appear before him, and, after expressing in gracious terms his sense of gratitude for the services I had rendered him, announced that he intended to

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attach me to his person. Without doubt his discernment had enabled him to perceive that I was possessed of discretion equal to my learning, for, after some pleasant converse, he made me a proposal which enabled me once more to give proof of my resource and skill.

He described in the most gracious terms the warm and pleasing sensations which my remedy had caused to run through his body. He then inquired whether I had among my drugs any equally powerful remedy which was less pleasant in its effects, though no less certain of producing a cure. I instantly guessed that curiosity was not his only motive for asking, and I replied cautiously that I was acquainted with many remedies, which differed greatly in the sensations they caused, and that, in deciding which remedy to apply in a particular case, I was guided as much by discretion as by medical requirements.

On hearing my reply, the Emperor was silent for a moment; and then, with an indifferent air, as though abandoning an idle query and returning to the main purpose of his conversation, he informed me that one of his principal Ministers lay sick of an obstinate fever, similar in its nature to that from which he himself had newly recovered, and he desired me to exercise my skill on his behalf, adding that he was graciously pleased to witness the application of the remedy. In saying this he regarded me with so subtle a look as warned me to seek for the hidden meaning of his words. A man of nice discernment, depending, as I did, upon his wit for the advancement of his fortunes, is ever ready to act upon a hint from those who can assist him;

and it needed no great penetration to understand that the Emperor, while desiring that his Minister should be cured, that he might avail himself of his services, had no great love for the man, and would not be displeased if the treatment should prove somewhat uncomfortable.

It may be supposed that the request left me in a quandary, since I knew of no remedies other than that which I had already applied. But those who imagine this have but little knowledge of the qualities which have established the reputation of the famous Count O'Connor. It has ever been noticed in me that the greater the difficulties in which I am placed the more ready is my natural acuteness to display itself. I had not pursued my fortunes for twenty years in all the Courts of Europe, overcoming obstacles which would have destroyed a gentleman of less courage, to fail at so trifling a task as now lay before me. Granted that I knew nothing of medicine, and that it was impossible to apply the one remedy that I did know of, did I then stand nonplussed? Not so. I conceived instantly a laughable scheme, by which I might add to my reputation by curing the Minister, and at the same time further ingratiate myself with the noble Prince who had already conceived so high an opinion of my powers and address.

Without pausing an instant for reflection, therefore, I replied that to know the Emperor's desires was to accomplish them. I proposed in this case to make use of my skill as a chirurgeon, rather than of my acquaintance with the properties of drugs; and I added that lest His Highness should fear that the life of his Minister might be endangered I would

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declare my intention of using no more deadly an instrument than a common feather.

It will readily be understood that my announcement aroused the liveliest curiosity in the breasts of His Majesty and the attendant Omrahs. Aurungzebe perceived that I had penetrated his meaning, and with a smile of commendation at my acuteness, he addressed me in a gracious tone, desiring me to order the attendants to make whatever preparations might be necessary. I therefore requested that the Minister might be carried in, lying upon his bedstead, and that some stout ropes or silken cords be brought.

When this had been done, and the Minister was lying upon his bed before me, gazing at my face with a good deal of uneasiness, I turned to the Emperor, and assuming a manner in which sprightliness and learning were combined in such proportions as could not fail to be pleasing to His Highness, I delivered myself of the following oration:—
“Your Majesty, the chirurgeons and learned men of my country are agreed that the diseases to which men are subject are chargeable to two distinct causes. Such a malady as that from which your Highness has been restored by the mercy of Allah and the skill of his humble servant, is undoubtedly caused by certain evil vapours in the atmosphere, which, being absorbed through the mouth and nostrils, give rise to those disagreeable results which, in your Imperial person, have given so much distress to your Majesty’s faithful subjects. But there is another sort of malady, caused by the presence in the body of one of those evil spirits, or demons, against which the Prophet directs us to be con-

stantly upon our guard. The former kind of affliction may be suitably treated by the application of soothing drugs, which restore the sick to health by destroying the poison in the blood; but the other kind, such as beyond all doubt afflicts the person of this distinguished nobleman, is much more stubborn. It has been found that so obstinate is the demon that he refuses to quit the body in which he has taken up his abode, and laughs at such drugs and simples as an ignorant doctor might apply. In these circumstances, the only method of curing the patient is by making his body such an uncomfortable habitation for the demon that he will of his own accord depart.

“I will therefore request your Majesty to give orders that the nobleman be bound securely upon his bedstead with these silken cords, in order that he may not by his struggles frustrate my efforts on his behalf.”

The Emperor discovered the greatest pleasure as he listened to my ingenious discourse, and disregarding the protests of the unhappy Omrah, who exhibited the liveliest fears as to what was about to befall him, he gave orders that my directions should be carried out. Thereupon certain lusty slaves descended upon the Minister, and in a very short time, acting under my instructions, had bound him firmly, paying particular attention to the securing of his ankles, so that he should not be able to withdraw his feet. I then requested them to step aside, and taking from one of them a stiff feather which I had requested him to bring me, I advanced towards the bed.

Amid the approving smiles of the Omrahs, I applied the feather diligently to the soles of the

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Minister's feet, drawing the plume lightly to and fro, now crossing my previous strokes, and again changing to a circular movement, touching the skin delicately and yet firmly, and maintaining so constant and rapid a motion as quickly induced the severest convulsions of uneasiness in the patient.

Had it been my fellow Nathoo, or any person of the lower orders, I might have tickled without result until the Day of Judgment, for these barbarians are accustomed to go barefoot from their childhood up, and the skin beneath their feet becomes so thick as to be insensible even to the thorns which frequently penetrate it when they travel. But, as I had anticipated, the Minister was a man of gentle nurture, who had always been accustomed to go shod; and, moreover, as is usual with these great nobles, he was accustomed to ride upon a horse or an elephant whenever his occasions took him far from the Palace. His soles, therefore, were as tender as those of a Christian, and by my tickling I very quickly had him in a frenzy. His struggles were tremendous, and after a while he relieved himself of the most dismal cries and bellowings. Thereupon I suspended my operations for a moment and respectfully addressed the Emperor.

"You will observe, your Highness," I said, "that the demon is unwilling to release his victim, and discovers his irritation by the loud cries he utters. Nevertheless, he will not be able to resist the treatment, and after some further struggles he will certainly depart, leaving the Minister exhausted, but cured of his fever."

I then returned to the Minister and resumed the application. Most of the Omrahs were now laughing heartily at the pleasant spectacle of this burly

man, who was bearded like the Prophet, wriggling like a child who is tickled by his nurse; and even Aurungzebe permitted a wry smile to twist his sallow features. Encouraged by these marks of approval, I redoubled my efforts, and the struggles of the Minister became so violent that I feared that he would succeed in bursting his bonds.

The discerning reader of these Memoirs will perceive that the virtue of my method lay in spurring on the Minister to such efforts as would induce a free perspiration, which is always the sign that the fever has relaxed its hold. I therefore watched closely for this result, and presently had the satisfaction of perceiving a slight moisture upon the Minister's writhing limbs. Thereupon I increased the energy of my application until the paroxysms rose to their supreme height. A terrible cry burst from his labouring chest, his struggles ceased suddenly, and he became unconscious, while at the same time the sweat burst freely from his skin until he became drenched and glistening with the natural dew of health.

I thereupon called to the chief hakim and pointed out the success of my treatment, asking him to bear witness to its results.

"Yes," replied the crafty fellow, in a voice loud enough to be heard by the Emperor, "it is indeed so. The fever is broken and the man will recover. Permit me to congratulate you upon the success of the treatment, which, as you will recollect, I privately recommended you to adopt in such cases as these. I perceive that you are a pupil who will bring me infinite renown."

At this impudent attempt to deprive me of my

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well-earned credit my blood boiled, and I was about to utter a vigorous denunciation. But prudence, for which, equally with courage, I am noted, induced me to restrain my indignation. After all, I reflected, I have already made one enemy this morning by the torture I have applied to the Omrah, and without doubt it will be useful to stand well with the hakim. Moreover, the Emperor is certainly aware of the character of his chief physician, and he is not likely to be misled by such a brazen assertion. So I swallowed my anger in silence, and, turning from the treacherous hakim, I directed that the Minister should be heavily wrapped in rugs and removed to his own house.

By my conduct of this affair I gained the highest credit with Aurungzebe, who presented me with a diamond of some value, directed that a suite of apartments in the Palace should be assigned to me, and appointed me to the post of chief physician to the Imperial Household, which I was to hold jointly with the hakim, Fazal Khan.

CHAPTER II.

I SUFFER A DISAPPOINTMENT, AND DISCOVER THAT I HAVE MADE TWO ENEMIES. I SAVE MY LIFE BY MY PRESENCE OF MIND.

I WAS so elated by my success that I did not at first apprehend the insecurity of my position, nor realise how slight were my actual gains. But in a very short time I began to understand that my fortune was not yet made. In the first place, I tried in vain to obtain the promised lac of rupees. In spite of his enormous revenues, Aurungzebe was always loath to disburse any considerable sums; and when I ventured to remind him of the reward which had been promised to the physician who should succeed in curing him, he very plainly refused to pay me the amount. He even feigned astonishment at my rapacity, and exclaimed, "What! Are you not content with the honour I have conferred upon you by appointing you to a place near my person? Do you hold the Great Mogul's favour in such small esteem that you think this reward insufficient?"

I hastened to protest that I was fully sensible of the honour he had done me, but I ventured to add that in travelling through his dominions I had been robbed of all that I possessed, and that I was now without means to support with credit the dignity he had conferred upon me.

"Peace, Cánar Sahib,"* replied the Emperor, "do not distress yourself over such a trifling matter.

* This was the nearest approach the Moguls could make to the correct pronunciation of my name.

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The appointment you hold is a valuable one : use it well, and you will gain riches. All my officers grow wealthy without my paying them one pie. I do not inquire whence their riches come, for a wise ruler is blind where it is not necessary for him to see. For your immediate necessities I will grant you an order upon my treasury for one thousand pagodas ; this will suffice for the present, and for the future let your discretion and zeal in my service bring you the inevitable reward of a quiet mind, which is more valuable than gold or jewels."

With this miserable sum I was forced to be content. I pondered over the Sovereign's words, and after a little consideration I concluded that it was true that my position would afford numerous opportunities of enriching myself, and I resolved to use these diligently, as far as was consistent with the untarnished honour and fair fame of an O'Connor.

But the lack of money was not my most serious difficulty. I had made two powerful enemies, the Minister Wazir Ali, upon whom I had inflicted a public indignity, and the principal hakim, who, I doubted not, was jealous of my sudden rise to a position equal to his own. The conduct of the Emperor towards his own Minister assured me that he would not concern himself to protect me ; in all the Court I had but two supporters—my servant Nathoo and the officer Mirza Khan, who, I discovered, was a captain of the bodyguard. Neither of these was sufficiently influential to be of much use to me, but I determined to secure their devotion ; for I have learned never to despise the aid even of the most humble. To Mirza Khan therefore I presented five hundred out of my thousand pagodas as

a reward for his good offices in bringing me into the Palace, and I intimated that I desired he would henceforth regard himself as being of my party should any disputes arise, the which he very readily promised. Nathoo I honoured by raising him to the position of my confidential secretary and giving him arbitrary authority over the retinue of servants and couriers whom I thought it necessary to employ. I handed him the remainder of my thousand pagodas for the remuneration of the staff, and directed him to husband it with the greatest care. The poor creature's gratitude at this signal mark of my benevolence was very affecting. He fell upon his knees, and, with tears streaming from his eyes, assured me that his life was at my disposal, that he would serve me as no Omrah had ever been served, and that he asked nothing better than to devote the rest of his life to the advancement of my interests. I highly commended this praiseworthy disposition, and informed him that I should ever be an indulgent patron while he continued faithful to me.

I had now to consider what attitude to adopt towards my two enemies. As regards Wazir Ali, I quickly saw that my offence was too serious to be removed. I had publicly humiliated him, in addition to inflicting upon him the severest torment, and forgiveness was not to be looked for. Nothing, I conceived, was to be gained by endeavouring to placate him, and I therefore determined to adopt towards him a haughty and resolute attitude, and to use every precaution which craft and subtlety might suggest to defeat his revengeful projects, and, if possible, to compass his ruin. Thus we see that even the kindest of men—for I am distinguished for

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the gentleness of my disposition—will become fierce and implacable when their interests are threatened, and that human nature is so contrived that we regard with peculiar detestation those upon whom we have inflicted an injury.

But I considered that Hakim Fazal Khan had no such reasons for hatred, and might be conciliated by judicious treatment. With this laudable and peaceful object, I immediately sought an interview with him, and I was admitted without difficulty into his presence, and found him reclining upon cushions, enjoying the fumes of a hookah. The hakim was a subtle man, and, whatever his real feelings, he displayed no resentment against me, but received me graciously. He desired me to sit upon his rug, and courteously offered me a tube attached to his own hookah, which I accepted, although the habit of using tobacco is unpleasant to me, and makes my stomach queasy.

After the usual ceremonious speeches, I addressed the hakim in the following words:—

“I am sensible, Hakim-ji, of the great honour which our Imperial master has conferred upon me by appointing me to a position of equality with so skilled a physician as yourself. Far be it from me to assume that I am worthy of such an honour. Indeed, I am fully sensible of my own defects, and should not think of comparing myself with the illustrious Fazal Khan. I beseech you to accord me the favour of your protection and good-will, for I believe that without these I am undone.”

When he had assured me of his favourable disposition towards myself, I continued:—

“I believe that we ought to unite, and, instead of

pursuing different objects, to join our efforts to our common benefit. Two can accomplish more than one, however ill-matched they may be, and I have little doubt that even my insignificant help may be useful to you in the prosecution of those schemes which you may entertain. In short, I desire friendship rather than rivalry, and an equal share for both in the profits accruing from the opportunities which present themselves."

The hakim considered a while, and then replied :

"What you say is very true, and for my part I only desire to pass my old age in peace and to avoid all strife. It is true that I do not believe you have any medical knowledge whatever, and that you are, in plain language, no better than an impostor and a thief ; your conduct as regards the Minister proves this, as it was mere trickery. But you have shown that you are a person of some discretion and considerable address, and I am not blind to the advantages which an alliance with you may bring me. You will readily understand that I can at any moment expose your ignorance and cause you to be thrown out of the Palace in disgrace ; but I do not desire this, as I am an old man and do not wish to injure anybody. Besides, I have taken a liking to you and believe that you may prove useful to me. I therefore agree to your proposal, except that I shall insist upon receiving two-thirds of all booty obtained by you, and shall retain the whole proceeds of my own business. When I require your assistance in any scheme I will render you one-third of the profits which may arise."

You may guess if I found this speech pleasant. His disgraceful references to my character I passed

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over in silence, considering it more dignified to ignore accusations which nobody could possibly credit. But I protested loudly against the dishonest fashion in which he proposed to rob me. I found, however, that I was entirely in his power. He threatened, if I did not agree, to go at once to the Emperor and prove my ignorance by confronting me with a malady of which I knew nothing, and challenging me to cure it. I dared not risk such an exposure, for, although I had succeeded very well by means of a stratagem in the case of simple fever, I could not look for a like happy result if I should endeavour to treat more complicated disorders. I was therefore obliged, after many protestations, to fall in with his terms, though I promised myself that I would on no account divulge to him any transactions in which I could succeed alone, and thus I hoped to avoid in some measure his extortionate demands.

It was not long before such an opportunity presented itself. The next day, as I was returning to the Palace, my attention was attracted by a disturbance which was taking place outside the main entrance, and as I approached I found a worthy fellow, dressed in the style which merchants of the city use, being very roughly handled by some of the guards. I had ever a disgust to oppression, and I rebuked the fellows roundly for their inhumanity. On inquiring as to the cause of the uproar, I found that the man was, as I had supposed, a merchant, who desired to present a petition to the Emperor on some matter affecting a dispute he had with a moneylender. But his opponent, guessing that he would make such an attempt, had taken the pre-

caution of bribing the guards to refuse him admission to the Public Audience, at which Aurungzebe was accustomed to hear petitions.

I thought I perceived an opportunity for combining a deed of compassion with some small profit to myself. I therefore ordered the guards to retire, and, taking the good man on one side, I acquainted him with my rank and offered to present his petition myself and to use my influence to have it granted.

The fellow, who was a Gentoo, expressed the liveliest gratitude, and, handing me a scroll upon which his request was inscribed, adjured me to present it to the Emperor without delay. He assured me that for this good action he would offer special prayers on my behalf to his gods. This was all very well, and for my part I was never inclined to despise the deities of the heathen, for, although we know that they are false gods, or perhaps wicked spirits, we cannot be sure that they have not some local influence, and it can do no harm to stand well with them. But this was not exactly what I wanted, as I proceeded to point out to the worthy merchant.

"I am much obliged by your good wishes," I said, "but I must remind you that I shall have to incur certain expenses in presenting your petition. It will not be wise for you to endanger its success by neglecting to provide the necessary means. You should, therefore, hand over to me a sum of money, which I will proceed to lay out to your advantage."

"True, lord," he replied, "the wheels of justice will not turn freely unless they are well greased," and with that he handed me a bag, which I found contained three hundred rupees in gold and silver. In accordance with my promise, I handed the petition over to the officer whose business it is to read

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documents to the Emperor, and this fellow very insolently demanded the sum of one hundred rupees as payment for his trouble. I was not inclined to agree to this rapacious demand, and I believe that in consequence the petition never reached His Majesty. Since I had done my share in the matter, however, by handing over the document to the person whose duty it was to present it, I did not allow this to trouble me. A clear conscience is ever the surest guarantee of happiness.

I relate this trifling incident to show that although I received no stipend or emoluments from the Emperor, my position was more valuable than I had supposed. Indeed, no sooner was it made known that I had been given a place than numbers of persons came to pay their respects to me, and each of these brought a present, for there were many who hoped to be able to make use of my good offices. And since it is customary at the Mogul Court to secure for every petition the support of some great noble, numerous chances for making an honest profit came to me, and I did not neglect to use them; but I was careful in such cases to do my best to redeem my promises, and my conduct in this respect compared very favourably with that of other great Omrahs, who did not scruple to receive presents without making any attempt to forward the interests of their clients. Before long I acquired a reputation for probity, which I venture to think was well deserved; and I found, as I have always done, that my honesty brought its due reward, for petitioners always came to me rather than to others, knowing that they could rely upon me to exert myself on their behalf.

But I must now turn to more serious matters. I

was living in daily expectation of some hostile act on the part of my enemy Wazir Ali, and it was not long before he made a move. His first attempt against me was a very clumsy one, though it might very well have succeeded against a strategist of less experience than the redoubtable Count O'Connor.

On his return to Court after a period of retirement, he affected to bear no ill-will against me, and treated me with apparent courtesy and frankness. Although I was not deceived by this attitude, I conceived a certain contempt for a man who could swallow the humiliation I had put upon him, and I foolishly permitted myself to indulge in some drolleries and veiled sneers at his expense, which, while they gained for me a certain reputation as a wit, and increased the Emperor's enjoyment of my company, undoubtedly inflamed the hatred which Wazir Ali already bore me. But he steadily refused to show resentment; he treated me with great respect, and used every effort to engage my good-will, and presently he sent me an invitation to an entertainment which he had prepared on my behalf.

Although I immediately penetrated his design, I judged that it would not be politic to refuse, and I therefore sent a ceremonious message expressing my appreciation, and added that I should bring with me the officer Mirza Khan, whose support, it will be recollected, I had purchased at the expense of five hundred pagodas. I privately informed this officer that I anticipated some treacherous attempt upon my life, and that I should look to him for succour.

When the appointed evening came, I repaired to the magnificent palace of Wazir Ali, escorted by Mirza Khan and my entire retinue of servants. The

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Minister received me with the most distinguished courtesy, and after we had seated ourselves upon cushions arranged on the floor, slaves came in bearing trays of sweetmeats, areca nuts wrapped in betel-leaves, and vessels containing perfumes of many kinds, including the priceless attar of roses, which was blown over our persons in a fine spray. When we had sufficiently refreshed ourselves, Wazir Ali told me that he had secured a troupe of beautiful *kenchenies*, or dancing girls, and asked me if it was my pleasure that they should appear and perform the *nache*.

I assented to his proposition, and he gave orders that the girls should appear. I found that he had not overrated their charms; they were indeed vastly superior to the common dancing girls of the country. One in particular attracted my attention; she appeared to be the leader of the troupe, and as she took up her position in front of the spot where I was reclining I had an excellent opportunity of observing her. She was tall for a native woman, with a voluptuous yet slender figure; her face was nearly white, with just enough tint to give it a peculiar warmth such as European women do not possess; she had great black eyes, with a truly bewitching glance, full scarlet lips, and a small nose with delicately curled nostrils. In her expression there was a peculiar mixture of languor and fierceness, and she reminded me of a tigress, terrible even in her amours.

From the first moment of her entrance this intoxicating *houri* kept her glance fixed upon me. I felt that her attitudes, her postures, her languorous glances, and the entrancing grace of her movements

were directed solely at me. Readers of my European travels do not need to be reminded that I ever fell a ready victim to feminine charms; indeed, it was commonly said of me that the terrible Count O'Connor, whom no three men might hope successfully to engage, could be subjugated and led a willing slave by the simplest little maid who ever braided her hair. This was so, and I now felt as keenly as I had ever done the powerful assaults of beauty upon my sensibility. But it must be recollected that I was fully prepared for some stratagem directed against my life, and the more my passions were aroused the more determined did I become that I would not permit this beautiful and dangerous creature to subjugate my senses to my undoing. I therefore continued to watch her closely, not neglecting at the same time to return with interest the amorous glances which she cast at me, and giving no outward indication that I was on the alert for any contingency.

After a while I began to find the dancing very monotonous, for these performances consist of nothing but some not very graceful posturings, which are endlessly repeated. However, Wazir Ali, though a Mohammedan, was no enemy to the juice of the grape, and presently he gave an order, and the attendants brought us some bowls of scented wine in which rose petals were floating. I took care to be very sparing in my use of this refreshment, having no mind to forward the schemes of my enemy by drowning my judgment in his not very generous vintage.

I continued to keep watch upon my enemy, and especially upon the fierce beauty in front of me, for

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a long time without anything being attempted against me, so that I began to think that I had perhaps been mistaken in my suspicions. But when the night was far advanced, Wazir Ali, thinking, I suppose, that the time was ripe for the execution of his detestable schemes, gave a signal. Thereupon the attendants and all save the three principal dancing girls retired. These three girls then brought each a bowl of wine, and, going on their knees, presented them to Mirza Khan, myself, and our host. I instantly guessed that the moment of danger had come. As I took the bowl from my beautiful houri and drained it, I cast a searching glance over her person, without letting her see what I was at. My eye fell upon a slight swelling in the bosom of her dress; this was what I expected, and I permitted myself to smile into her eyes with a significance which she could not as yet understand.

I now resolved to bring the affair to a head at once, for the sooner I confronted the danger the sooner I might overcome it. I therefore beckoned the girl to share my cushions, and she came, looking at me with an amorous glance which might well have ensnared my senses. But I knew what was intended, and as I took her lithe body into my arms I thrust my hand suddenly into her bosom, and from that warm and secret hiding-place I drew forth an evil knife, which I held up with a laugh. "See!" I cried, "this sweetest of roses has its thorn, and might wound him who rashly plucks it. But, having removed the thorn, I can safely enjoy the perfume of the blossom."

I handed the knife to Mirza Khan, and crushing my murderess in my arms I kissed her scarlet lips

passionately. "Look you, pretty one," I whispered to her, "I know very well what you intended against me, but I do not war against women, and I shall inflict upon you no other punishment than this for your treachery," and with that I kissed her again. She looked at me with her great black eyes, giving not the least sign either of fear or shame. I made her pay me full tale in kisses for her murderous designs against me, and, though it may appear strange, she yielded to me readily—ay, and returned my embraces with a passion equal to my own. Again she made me think of a tigress, who will alternately rend her lord with her teeth, and receive his passionate endearments.

Wazir Ali feigned concern when I discovered the knife. Knowing that I had penetrated his design, he gave no sign of guilt; indeed, he professed the greatest indignation against the dancer, and offered to have her beaten—so careless are evil men of their instruments when these have failed them. "I protest that such treachery afflicts me with the utmost horror," he cried. "I rejoice that you have escaped unharmed, for if you had been injured in my house I could never have forgiven myself. As for that wicked woman, be sure that she shall suffer the punishment her treachery demands."

At that the girl, whom I had kept by me, began plucking at my sleeve; and, seeing that she appeared very uneasy, I bent my head, so that she might speak in my ear. "Lord," she whispered, "he will kill me for my failure. I beseech you to protect me, and I will ever be the most faithful of your slaves."

I could scarcely forbear to laugh at the thought that this girl, who had so lately purposed to slay

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me, should now appeal so confidently to my protection. However, I determined that I would not leave her to Wazir Ali's vengeance, for I felt that she was but an ignorant heathen, and knew no better; and, moreover, she was most likely but an instrument in the hands of my foe, who had perhaps used threats to oblige her to further his schemes. "Fear not, little one," I whispered, "you shall not suffer."

I then turned to Wazir Ali. "Why, look you," I cried, "she certainly deserves punishment, but I prefer to inflict it myself. I shall therefore request you to hand her over to me, to deal with as I please." And with that I gave him such a look as showed him plainly that I understood him. "It appears to me that you owe me this favour," says I.

He could not refuse this request, and he consented, though with an ill-grace. The upshot of it was that I took the girl with me when I went home and gave her shelter in my household. I was, indeed, somewhat at a loss to know what to do with her, for I did not desire to give my enemies any occasion for ill-natured gossip; and, besides, the girl's beauty occasioned some disturbance amongst the men of my household. I therefore considered that I could not do better than marry her to one of my fellows, which I did; and I have no reason to doubt that she made him a very good wife. I appointed her to perform some menial duties for me, and she carried these out very faithfully. She became, indeed, much attached to my interests, and whenever I saw her I took care to address some kindly words to her, with a view to confirming her in her attachment to me.

After this attempt I saw still more clearly that

it was to my interest to gain as many supporters as possible, and therefore I did not forget to reward Mirza Khan richly for his adherence ; and, in pursuit of the same design, I voluntarily handed over to the hakim his share of some of my transactions, though I might very easily have kept them from his knowledge, hoping in this way to make him see how desirable was my friendship. In truth, I feared him more than Wazir Ali. The Minister's hatred was so fierce that it had already led him into a blundering attempt upon my life, and the violence of his feelings prevented him from using the cautious strategy by which alone he might hope to succeed against a man of my address. But the physician had a cold and subtle temper, infinitely more dangerous than the hot passions of Wazir Ali. I knew very well that so long as he found me useful he would make no move against me, but I did not disguise from myself the truth that nothing I could do would ever gain his good-will. As soon as he found that the balance of advantage to himself lay on the side of getting rid of me, he would brush me from his path with as little compunction as I would feel in sweeping aside a noxious insect. It therefore behoved me to make myself as useful to him as I could, and this I determined to do, in spite of the loss which I should thereby be occasioned. I did all I could to placate him, but I soon had reason to believe that he was as much my foe as Wazir Ali, and would stick at nothing to destroy me.

CHAPTER III.

THE LADY KISHNA AND THE GARDEN IN THE WILDERNESS.

It might be supposed that, surrounded as I was by enemies, I should experience some depression of spirits. Those who know me, however, will realise that I was not the man to permit the danger in which I stood to affect my demeanour. In my European campaigns I had become noted as the most light-hearted, as well as the bravest, cavalier who ever drew sword in a desperate cause, and this reputation I had gained by my habit of disregarding the most ominous prospects of the future. I have on many occasions, when in the most desperate situations, astonished even the bravest of men by my cheerfulness and my power of enjoying whatever momentary pleasures I could discover.

This courageous disposition now served me in good stead, for, despite the many dangers which threatened me, I refused to allow myself to be dismayed, content to meet each hazard as it came, and to combat it with the natural weapons of valour and resource with which Providence has so richly endowed me. In the meantime, I busied myself in perfecting my establishment, surrounding myself with a retinue of couriers and attendants of all sorts, dressed in a handsome uniform, which I caused to be made after my own design, and purchasing horses, and providing for them such furniture as should reflect credit upon the splendour of my situation. I was thus able to make a con-

siderable display when I moved abroad, and the populace crowded to view my progress, giving vent to cries of admiration.

I was careful on these occasions to distribute alms, as well as to show the most scrupulous respect to the prejudices of the heathen; and in this way I very soon became one of the most beloved of the great nobles attached to the Court. In pursuit of this laudable design of obtaining popularity I have even condescended, when passing through those quarters which are inhabited by the Indous, to dismount and pay my respects to some of those naked and filthy philosophers, or fakirs, whom the people of the country regard with such extraordinary reverence. These rascally saints assume the appearance of the greatest piety, and have a powerful influence over the ignorant populace, whom they delude by the astonishing sufferings which they willingly undergo, the severity of which is so great that many of them are rendered crippled and helpless by the deformities resulting from their austerities.

Besides the Moguls and the Gentiles, or Indous, who form the proper population of the city, there were at this time many Europeans residing at Agra—Portuguese, English, and others. These persons, I found, regarded me with dislike, owing to the splendour of my position at the Court, which compared so favourably with the suspicion and contempt which these people have earned from the inhabitants. No great man is without his enemies and calumniators, whose envy prompts them to make unworthy accusations against the object of their dislike; and in this respect I have been no more fortu-

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nate than others. Under a pretence of piety, some of these fellows—particularly the English, with whom I never cared to have any commerce—have published the most malicious and injurious falsehoods with regard to my conduct in India. I think it proper, therefore, to state publicly that all the accusations which have been made against me, which to some extent have been accepted by some who have not had the opportunity of correcting their impressions by a personal knowledge of my character, are vile and malicious inventions.

Amongst other things, it has been laid to my charge that, while residing at the Court of the Great Mogul, I did falsely and basely abandon the Catholic faith and embrace the Mussalman heresy; and further, that I so far forgot the principles in which I was educated that I took to myself heathen wives, thus committing the double sin of apostasy and polygamy. In these foolish accusations it is easy to recognise the hand of envy. The charge of apostasy, indeed, might seem to be supported by the fact that I abandoned European clothing, which the persons I have mentioned insist upon wearing, and adopted the Mussalman dress, allowing my beard to grow long, and in a short time, no doubt, I presented the outward appearance of a true son of Islam. I did this with a double object: firstly, because I judged that the native style of clothing was more suitable to the rigorous heats of Agra; and secondly, that by removing the visible evidence of my European blood I might also remove a tendency to suspicion or jealousy in the minds of the Omrahs. I even went so far as in other ways to adopt the outward usages of the Mohammedans, and

I very soon perceived that this was a wise action, for it pleased the Emperor greatly. He was a fervent Mussalman, and, in obedience to the command of his Prophet, he endeavoured to pervert me to his way of thinking; indeed, he was so particular with me as to make it difficult for me to refuse him without forfeiting his good-will. I contrived, however, to maintain my position, ever leading him to suppose that a little further effort would result in my conversion, while inwardly I remained unshaken in my allegiance to the Church. Thus I not only avoided angering him by a direct refusal, but I kept him constantly interested in me, while at the same time I enjoyed the inward peace which a good conscience alone can secure.

On these slight grounds, and on the fact that I declined to attend Mass at a Portuguese church, my enemies have based their accusations of apostasy. Nor is the further charge of polygamous marriage better founded. It is true that I do not lay claim to that ferocious degree of virtue to which some pretend who are no better than myself. I am no priest, but a soldier, accustomed rather to the rough ways of camps than to the niceties of courtly behaviour. If I have occasionally fallen a victim to those amorous inclinations from which none of us are free, am I to be condemned as a polygamist? I challenge those who have brought the accusation to prove that I ever participated in a marriage ceremony.

I now propose to relate a most singular adventure which befell me, and the dreadful tragedy in which it resulted: a tragedy which was designed by my enemies for my undoing. It is true that I escaped from their snares, yet they inflicted upon my heart

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a wound from which I have never recovered, although nigh forty years have passed since it took place.

It was my habit, when wearied by the pomps and ceremonies of the Court, to seek rest and refreshment by riding out beyond the city, accompanied only by a trusty courier, to contemplate the beauties of nature, which have ever been a source of joy to me. To the southward of the city, in the direction of Gualeor, there lay a great extent of waste land, which had been preserved by the Emperor's grandfather for the purpose of hunting. This wilderness was my favourite resort when I wished for solitude, and here I would ride for hours, admiring the magnificent plumage of the peacocks and watching the graceful movements of the antelopes, which would allow me to approach near enough to observe them plainly, and then set off, dashing away at a pace which quickly carried them out of sight.

It chanced that I was wandering in this region one day, and having penetrated further than usual, I came upon a wide open space, in the centre of which was a walled enclosure. From the graceful trees, whose tops could be seen over the wall, I concluded that inside was a garden, such as the Omrahs sometimes make for themselves at a distance from the city, and to which they retire when they desire solitude and diversion. Full of curiosity, I rode up to the wall, which was about ten feet high, and made a circuit of the place, seeking to find a means of entrance. There were two doors lying upon opposite sides, and from each ran a little beaten pathway. I tried to open the doors, but they were firmly locked, and, finding that I could not gain an

entrance, I turned away. As I did so there fell upon my ears the sweet notes of a woman's voice. The sound came from within the garden, at some little distance from the wall, and I could not distinguish the words of the song. Unfortunately, as I turned my horse to listen the better, he stumbled, and made a loud clattering with his hoofs upon the dry ground. The song ceased immediately, and, although I waited for a long time, it was not resumed.

I rode home at last, wondering who could be the fair inmate of this garden. That she was young, and therefore perhaps beautiful, I guessed from the soft, almost childish, accents of the voice which I had heard. I will not deny that the mysterious and romantic situation of this female, confined, perhaps imprisoned, within the walls of a garden set in the midst of a savage wilderness, engaged my curiosity. When I returned to the fort, I made some inquiries; but being unwilling to speak too plainly, I failed to obtain any information.

This difficulty only inflamed my curiosity, and I determined to make an effort to solve the mystery, and gain admittance to the garden. The next day, therefore, about two hours after mid-day, I rode out again in the same direction, accompanied only by my fellow Nathoo, whom I could trust. I dismounted at a distance, and leaving my man in charge of the horse, with orders not to stir from the spot, I proceeded on foot to the garden, and, halting beneath the wall, waited for some sign of the fair unknown.

For a long time I heard no sound. Although I stood in the shadow cast by the wall, the air was

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warm and heavy, and presently the silence and the heat inclined me to slumber. I was half sleeping, when on a sudden the voice I had heard before broke out on the still air. The sound of it was soft and low, but this time the singer was close to me on the far side of the wall, and I had no difficulty in distinguishing her words. She sang the following verse :—

The Rosebud, drooping in the shade of the garden,
sighed to her lover the Sun,
“Beloved, why dost thou not cast thy bright glance
upon me? Why dost thou leave me thus alone?
I am as a bride unvisited, my beauty wasteth, because
thou comest not.
My heart is sick for thee. Wilt thou leave me until
I am consumed by love?”

I immediately understood that these simple words contained a message, and without hesitation I sang the following in reply :—

“Even as the Rose desireth the Sun, so he desireth her;
Fain would he shed upon her the life-giving beams of
his love.
He in the firmament, she in the shade of her tree-
embowered garden,
Are they not one? Yet are they parted by a screen
which the Sun cannot pierce.”

After a little pause, the sweet voice sang again :—

“Who then shall unite them, the Rose and her lover the
Sun?
The Rose cannot leap from her stem, nor the Sun
desert his place in the sky;
But he that tendeth the garden, seeing the Rosebud
wither and die,
Lo! he hath pierced the screen, that she may revive in
the beams of her lover.”

Pondering for a while, I felt certain that this verse meant more than was apparent, and acting upon what I took to be the sense of it, I began walk-

ing round the wall. I was not at all surprised to find that the first door I came to stood wide open. I cast a hasty glance round, to make sure I was not observed, but the thicket in the neighbourhood was so dense that there was little chance of that. I stepped inside, and immediately the door swung-to behind me.

The Emperor had many beautiful gardens, and I had been admitted to some of them, but I saw none so fair as this. Just inside the wall was planted a row of great trees, running all round the garden, whose foliage was so thick as to shut off all direct heat of the sun. The inner space was covered with grass, the greenest I have ever seen, and in the centre was a marble basin sunk in the ground, in which a fountain played perpetually, fed by some hidden spring. Four little canals ran in white marble conduits from this basin in different directions, and along their borders were flower-besprinkled bushes, so thick and large as to allow only a small portion of the garden to be seen from any point of view. The air was warm, and odorous with the sweet breath of countless blossoms. Peacocks, attracted from the outer wilderness to this fertile spot, perched upon the summits of the walls and strutted over the lawns, displaying their wondrous jewelled tails. To my eyes, accustomed to the fervent glare of the Indian sun, this garden, bathed in a cool, green light, with here and there upon the sward a moving spot of brightness, where some shaft of sunlight struggled through a gap in the screen of waving foliage, seemed like a sweet languorous glimpse of Paradise. I stood entranced, gazing upon the lovely scene, until the clang of the door behind me made me start and turn.

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I was ever on the alert for some treachery on the part of my enemies, and for an instant I believed that I had perhaps been lured into a trap. But my uneasiness passed away when I saw before me only a bent old woman, who peered at me with sly eyes from behind her veil. She did not utter a word, but beckoning me to follow, she hobbled along a winding path among the bushes. At length we came to an arch of marble, set in heavy green foliage, and, halting here, she motioned me forward, and without a word hurried silently away.

I stood for a moment, wondering what awaited me; then, yielding to my impatience, I stepped through the arch. I saw an open plot of grass, set like an emerald in masses of rose-bushes covered with blossoms. In the centre stood a little pavilion of white marble, in front of which was a dais, covered with an awning of crimson silk, supported by slender columns of marble; and here, reclining upon a heap of cushions, was a lovely child, who gazed at me with eyes full of startled curiosity. At first she drew her veil shyly across her face, but then, taking courage, she removed it, and gave me a smile of welcome.

I call her a child, for, as I afterwards discovered, she was but fifteen years old, and her timid eyes, her sweet low voice, and her pretty ignorance of the cruel world where men live and strive, made her seem more childish than she really was. But her face and form had already attained the ripest perfection, and according to the barbarous notions of the Indous at fifteen a female is in the full prime of womanhood. And although the Eastern women age so rapidly in body that at twenty-five they are wrinkled and withered, yet in some matters they

remain perfectly childish and ignorant, owing to the fanatical jealousy of their lords, who seclude them from all commerce with the outer world, and had rather slay them than permit them to hold converse with a man.

It is impossible for me to describe the beauty of this delightful creature : words cannot convey any idea of her perfections. Certainly, a gentleman who has been admitted to the favour of the most famous beauties of Europe, as was the case with me, must be supposed to possess a nice discrimination in such matters, and it is not at all likely that he will suffer himself to express extravagant admiration for every handsome girl. Yet I must admit that in this case I was astonished. I had never seen such beauty as hers ; and all those lovely faces which rise in my memory as I recall the gallant days of my youth sink into insignificance by comparison with this exquisite Eastern flower.

I shall confess that I experienced a feeling of embarrassment when I found myself in the presence of this beautiful girl, and for a few moments I was at a loss how to address myself to her. But I very soon perceived that she was even less at her ease than I was ; doubtless to one who had been reared in perpetual seclusion the sudden appearance of a gallant stranger must have been sufficiently alarming. I was able to understand this better when I came to converse with her.

She told me that her name was Kishna. According to the barbarous usage of the Gentiles, she had been married five years before, when she was no more than ten years old, to one Jai Singh, a petty Raja whom I knew well. I often saw him about

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the Court; he was a man of no account, in spite of his wealth, for Aurungzebe hated the Gentoos, and would give them no official posts. I could not forbear to shudder at the thought of the Lady Kishna, an exquisite tender flower, mated to that withered old gray ape.

Her husband neglected her when he found that she gave him no children, but he did not ill-treat her. She was allowed to pass her time in the garden pavilion, which belonged to the Raja; and here she would wile away the hot Indian day as best she could, dreaming, I dare say, of some gallant young Prince, who should come some day and deliver her from her bondage. And when I came to her, rich, handsome, and covered with the glory which my exploits had earned, who shall doubt that she saw in the gallant Frank, of whose courage and brilliant position at the Court she must have heard so many wonderful tales, a splendid realisation of her dreams?

The feeling of awkwardness which the sight of this delightful creature had aroused in my bosom did not so far deprive me of my usual self-control as to make me backward in recommending myself to her approval when once I had spoken to her. On the contrary, I used every effort to engage her interest and to overcome those coy palpitations which the sight of a strange and gallant cavalier had undoubtedly occasioned in her gentle breast, and in this attempt I achieved so much success that in a very short space of time we were engaged in a conversation of the most intimate and delightful nature—for I had now attained to such proficiency in the lingo as enabled me to convey the most

subtle and tender flatteries with very little risk of being misunderstood. By her looks the Lady Kishna gave me to understand that my eager approaches were not distasteful to her, and when at last, after two or three hours of the most delightful dalliance which I have ever enjoyed, the setting sun notified me that it was time for me to leave her, I had the satisfaction of knowing that I had made such a deep impression upon her heart as nothing but death could ever efface.

This first meeting in the garden in the wilderness was but one of many, and presently I fell into the habit of repairing thither whenever I desired rest and relief from the pomps of the Imperial Court and the constant intrigues and stratagems by which I was daily surrounded.

The garden, with its soft green lawns, its shady walks, and its languorous flower-scented air, was an exquisite spot, set gem-like in the midst of the arid, sun-scorched plain, and the happy hours I spent there with Kishna contrasted in like manner with the enmities and the harsh strivings of my daily life. At Court I knew that I carried my life in my hands, despite the favour of Aurungzebe, for I understood that this might fail me at any moment; but here, with my gentle Kishna, I could relax for a while the watchfulness which the jealousy and hatred of the Omrahs obliged me to preserve.

In that portion of my Memoirs which describes my adventures in Europe, I have not hesitated to relate those pretty encounters in the lists of love in which I have been wont to find relaxation from the hardships and perils of campaigning. On these amours I can look back with a light heart, and

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relate them with a smile; and if I sigh, too, it is only at the thought of those soft eyes which once beamed upon me, now sunken and bleared with old age; those blooming cheeks, which were wont to blush so coyly at my approach, now withered and seamed with wrinkles. But I cannot thus lightly describe those golden days, when the lovely Kishna lay in my arms, pouring out in childish accents the sweet fancies to which her love gave birth, or listening with beating heart or shortened breathing as I recounted some desperate feat of arms in which I had engaged. In short, I experienced such delightful happiness, and I afterwards fell into such frightful grief at the tragedy in which my amour ended, that I cannot endure to make these matters the subject of a pleasant tale.

It had never been my custom to take these tender passages too seriously, or to permit them to disturb my peace of mind. But I am obliged to confess that the Lady Kishna, by her beauty and tenderness, and by her childish admiration for my parts and for the brilliant position I had gained, made such a powerful onslaught upon my sensibility that her image was constantly in my mind, and even at those times when I was engaged in some important disputation before the Emperor I was unable to prevent my thoughts from dwelling upon her. Indeed, my ardour became so pressing that I constantly indulged in all sorts of delicious fancies, even at times when I should have been more profitably engaged. I experienced all the tender fears and the delicious hopes of a youth who falls, for the first time, a victim to this delightful passion. At times I would fall into an ecstasy of terror, supposing that the

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Raja was about to discover our loves ; or, again, I would weave all sorts of wild and desperate plans for carrying off my lady, away from the ferocious and fanatical Moguls, to some lonely bower of love where we might pass the rest of our lives in an endless rapture of delight. Although I did my best to put such foolish notions out of my head, yet they constantly returned, and sometimes, even when I was in the presence of the Emperor himself, I would find myself smiling at some tender fancy which arose in my mind, and I would rouse myself suddenly, to find the Omrahs staring at me in astonishment.

My awakening from this dream of happiness came so suddenly as to make my grief the more poignant. It constantly happens in the affairs of men that when we have considered every possible disaster, and taken every precaution which anxiety can suggest, we are overtaken by a calamity which has never occurred to us, which we could not have foreseen, so that all our careful preparations are useless. So it was with me. I had pictured to myself every possible interruption to our loves, and planned what steps I would take in every event to guard my Lady Kishna from harm. What actually happened was a frightful disaster, quite different from anything that I had imagined ; and, despite the ardour of my affection for her, I was unable to take any steps to guard her, and could not avert the dreadful fate which overtook her.

There came a day when they told me that Kishna's lord, the Raja, was dead. The news surprised me, but it did not cause me any great concern, for I knew little of the Gentoo customs, save

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what I had learned from Kishna's lips. At the Mogul Court the Indous are despised : few of them hold any office of importance, though Christians, and Mohammedans of every kind—Turks, Arabs and Afghans—are freely admitted to the highest employments. But Aurungzebe ever hated and despised the Indous, and though there were many Rajas at the Court, they received no consideration and were not permitted to exercise authority. So it came about that I was ignorant of their barbarous usages. When I heard that Kishna's Raja was dead, as I have said, I was not greatly troubled. True, I understood that for a while, at least until the obsequies were over, our loves must suffer interruption, and for this I grieved. But I looked forward to their renewal after a brief interval ; I even had wild dreams of obtaining Aurungzebe's consent to my union with the widow. Alas ! poor fool, how little did I foresee the event.

On the second day after the Raja's death I set forth, a little after noon, accompanied only by my faithful Mirza Khan, to ride along the banks of the river Jumna, hoping that the exercise and the open air might somewhat relieve the depression from which I was suffering. I rode but slowly, taking little heed of my surroundings, and, indeed, there was but little to attract attention. The country hereabouts is flat and level, and covered for the most part with crops ; only along the river bank is the even surface broken on either side by a strip of land, a mile in width, scored by the rains of the wet season into a maze of tortuous channels.

But here and there are patches of low sandy shore, which are inundated during the floods, and which in

the dry season stretch firm and level and are excellent for riding. It was upon such a bank that I presently perceived a knot of persons, who appeared to me to be engaged in some ceremony. Hoping for diversion, I rode towards them, intending to witness their proceedings, and I was excessively surprised when Mirza Khan, who had been riding a little behind, as is proper for a dependent, now spurred his horse forward, and, coming up with me, endeavoured to dissuade me from approaching the group. I inquired what might be his reason for this, but he would tell me nothing. After pressing him without gaining any answer beyond the declaration that it was not fitting that I should witness the proceedings of these strangers, I told him that I would certainly go on.

At that he discovered so much agitation as to inflame my curiosity still further; but I continued to advance without paying any heed to his protestations and entreaties, for I was persuaded that he was endeavouring to conceal some mystery from me, and I could not but suppose that it was a matter which affected me in some way, or he would not have been so assiduous in attempting to hold me back. His persistence had the effect of strengthening my determination to proceed; and at last, finding his importunity intolerable, I ordered him, rather harshly, to fall behind me and hold his peace, the which he did with a very glum countenance.

O accursed curiosity! Had I but known I had perished rather than look upon that dreadful scene. Of a truth the hand of Fate was heavy upon me, driving me to be a witness of the dreadful tragedy which was to blight my happiness.

As I came nearer I perceived that some religious

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ceremony was proceeding, and the mournful cries of the little throng of persons soon informed me of its nature. Riding up to the outskirts of the crowd, and looking over their heads from my position on horseback, I saw that a deep pit had been dug in the sand close to the water's edge, and within it was a great pile of brushwood. Upon the surface of this pile was the body of a man, lying upon his back, and gazing blindly towards the sky. You will understand that I felt a good deal of agitation when I saw that it was the corpse of Kishna's Raja.

In my ignorance, I supposed that nothing more was to happen than the ceremony of burning the dead body. The notion of intruding upon the obsequies of him who had so lately been my rival was distasteful to me, and I turned my horse away, intending to withdraw from the scene. At that moment my eyes fell upon a knot of excited persons, close to the brink of the pit, and as I saw them I stopped suddenly, stricken through by a terrible thought.

These persons were Brahmans, or Gentoo priests; they were shrieking in a kind of religious frenzy and brandishing long staves. But it was not upon them that my gaze rested, but upon a female who stood heavily veiled in their midst. Even as I gazed at this figure, which, in spite of the veil, seemed so strangely familiar, my dread was confirmed, for one of the gesticulating madmen caught the veil aside as he flourished his staff, and disclosed for a moment the lovely features of my Lady Kishna.

It was but a glimpse that I had, for the next instant she had replaced the veil. But it was enough. There rushed into my mind all that I had

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ever heard of the horrible practice of the Indous called Suttce : the voluntary self-immolation of a living widow upon her husband's pyre. Mother of God ! What agony seized upon me as I understood !

What madness, what fatal and incomprehensible folly possessed her, that she could thus willingly sacrifice herself upon the pyre of a husband whom in life she had detested, whom she had never hesitated to deceive ? Was it merely the power of heathen superstition that swayed her, or dread of the scorn and disrespect which is the portion of a childless Indian widow ? Or was it, perhaps, some late repentance, some perverted desire to make reparation to the husband whom she had wronged ? Was I, alas, the hidden cause of her appalling sacrifice ?

These were the thoughts which tormented my brain as I dashed forward into the crowd, to throw myself at the feet of my beloved. Of what followed I have no connected knowledge. I can only recall isolated scenes, as, on the morrow of a tortured night, a man recalls some hideous details of the nightmare which has oppressed him. I recollect that I was kneeling before my love, pouring out I know not what wild words of entreaty, of passionate supplication. I have an impression of a hideous countenance, inflamed with the madness of religious exaltation, glaring into mine : of being dragged aside and flung upon the ground. After that a roaring mass of flame, surrounded by the demoniacal figures of Brahmans thrusting further into the fire something—Mary, Mother of Christ, what was it ?—with the long staves, that flamed and withered in their hands.

After that, blackness. I know not what hap-

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pened : how I left, or was brought from the fatal spot. Nor have I any recollection of the days and nights that followed, until, weeks later, I awoke to knowledge upon a bed of sickness.

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Of what I suffered during my slow recovery, the tortures of memory, of useless regret, of bitter self-reproach, I shall not tell. These are matters I cannot endure to think upon, and I shall pass over the period between the events here related and the time when I had recovered at least a measure of outward serenity. Mirza Khan and my man Nathoo watched over me during my illness with the utmost fidelity, and it was from the former that I learned the hidden cause of the catastrophe.

Wazir Ali, it seems, had discovered my visits to Kishna in the garden, and had seized upon the opportunity of doing me an injury. He was for warning the Raja, but on the advice of Fazal Khan, the physician, he abandoned the intention. My fellow-hakim pointed out that such a scheme against me might very easily go astray ; the Raja would be so much incensed that he would make a violent attack upon me, and it might end in my getting the better of him. So the two scoundrels hatched a diabolical plot, of which I never learned more than the outlines. How it was contrived I do not know, but it is certain that the Raja was poisoned. Upon his death certain Brahmans in the pay of the conspirators were sent to exert their influence upon his widow and to endeavour to arouse her religious sentiments ; and in this, as I have related, they were but too successful. The plot was, indeed, worthy of the infamous Fazal Khan. It was designed to be a double-edged weapon against me ; for, in the

first place, the tragic death of the lovely Kishna was a deadly blow at my happiness, and it was further calculated that I should be so enraged as to commit myself to some desperate act, through the consequences of which my enemies might compass my destruction. The plot was cunningly conceived, for if I had not become insensible by reason of my excessive agitation I should most certainly have attempted some violence against the diabolical Brahmans, who, inflamed with religious zeal, would not have hesitated to carry out the instructions they had received by casting me into the flaming pit, where I should have died the most horrible of deaths. Thus it was the malignity of my foes which frustrated their plans, for the very violence of the grief they had inflicted upon me preserved me from the fate they had designed.

I was, indeed, unwilling to believe in such a dastardly plot, though Mirza Khan was very positive in the matter; but he was presently able to supply me with proof. One of the Brahmans was bribed, and readily revealed the whole plot. On this I fell into such a fever of rage and hatred against my villainous foes as greatly retarded my recovery. When at length I arose from my bed of sickness, I resolved to devote my whole energies to the destruction of the two scoundrels. I saw plainly, however, that it would be necessary to proceed with the utmost caution if I would prevail against Fazal Khan, and I determined to be guilty of no rashness, but to wait patiently until such an opportunity should arise as should hold out a reasonable hope of success; to this end I resumed the ordinary occupations of my life, resolved not to endanger my chances by impetuous action.

CHAPTER IV.

I SECURE THE EMPEROR'S GOOD-WILL, AND CONFER A BENEFIT
UPON A PHILOSOPHER.

IN uttering these Memoirs it is not my intention to give any detailed account of the strange country of the Indous, nor to describe the many wonderful sights I saw. It is, indeed, a land full of marvels, and the very forces of nature, so genial and kindly in our more fortunate climate, here display themselves with such an exaggerated degree of energy that men are constantly occupied in avoiding the dangers and discomforts which result therefrom. In place of the bright and pleasant sunshine of Europe, the land is afflicted, during the greater part of the year, by fierce and grievous heats, so insupportable that at times I found it impossible to go abroad save in the cooler hours of the morning and evening. The rain only falls in two months out of the whole year, and in that period it descends so copiously and with such incredible violence that the houses are frequently washed away, and the roads become impassable. Indeed, everything is exaggerated in like degree : instead of the soft green sward to which we are accustomed, there are vast plains, covered with gigantic grasses which often grow to the height of ten feet, and sometimes, as I am informed, even to double that size. The woods and forests are haunted by savage and bloodthirsty animals, such as tigers, lions, and others even more terrible. Poisonous serpents abound everywhere, and even those smaller creatures, such as gnats or mosquitos, fleas, as well as many other grievous pests with

which Europeans are not acquainted, swarm in such inconceivable numbers that the traveller is apt to find his life unendurable, until use has rendered him indifferent to such annoyances.

These are but a tithe of the strange things which I could relate, but I leave all these matters to such ingenious travellers as those who have already favoured the public with many accounts of the wonders of Indoustan. Nor do I propose to relate the details of my daily life. The reader must suppose me occupied in performing the duties of my station, and leading the ordinary life of a great noble: attending daily at the Court, where I conversed with the Emperor and entertained him with my wit, hearing the petitions of those who desired me to interest myself on their behalf, and, above all, prosecuting with unfailing vigour and with no small degree of success every plan which seemed to offer a chance of augmenting my fortune. With regard to the post of physician to which I had been appointed, I found no difficulty in carrying out such duties as fell to me under that head; for I employed two or three learned men as deputies, who attended to all such cases of illness as my coadjutor Fazal Khan was not disposed to treat.

It is likely that the recital of these minor incidents might prove sufficiently entertaining, but I have no leisure for such matters. I am here concerned only with those more extraordinary adventures which from time to time befell me. I have therefore to warn the reader that intervals of varying length elapsed between the notable occurrences which I describe, and in the meantime I steadily pursued my plans, gradually increasing my wealth,

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and by my wit and courage greatly endearing myself to the gracious Sovereign whom I had the privilege to serve, so that he grew to have the greatest enjoyment of my conversation.

As I have said, I was by now so proficient in the language of the Court as to be able to converse with Aurungzebe on any subject, with the result that he conceived the greatest admiration for my parts. I took care that this favourable opinion should not fade. In my conversation sprightliness and profundity were so skilfully commingled that I was able to impress my Imperial patron with an equally high opinion of my spirit and wisdom. To this end I constantly engaged in disputations with the Omrahs, and with the learned men whom the liberal spirit of the Sovereign attracted to the Court in great numbers, avoiding with a great deal of skill the appearance of supporting such opinions as I knew to be disagreeable to His Majesty. In these encounters I usually comported myself with credit, and indeed, often completely vanquished my opponents. This added greatly to my reputation, though it gained me some enemies; for I never failed, when I saw that an argument was going against me, to give such a turn to the conversation as to enable me to pour ridicule upon my opponent; and I usually found this ruse successful, for here as elsewhere the majority are more ready to applaud a shrewd and flippant reply than the most profound and ingenious logic. By the exercise of this peculiar kind of agility I would discomfort my opponents, drowning in the merriment which I aroused by some droll remark the weighty argument with which he thought to crush me. I never heeded the frowns of

those who were thus overthrown, for, feeling secure in the Imperial favour, I could afford to disregard the malice of lesser personages.

But I could be serious, too, when it suited me ; and it was certainly owing to the admiration which some of my discourses aroused in him that Aurungzebe now began to consult me in matters of policy. On some occasions he did me the honour to adopt the course I recommended, with the happiest results ; and in all such matters I observed my usual practice of discretion, for where I perceived that his religious or other prejudices inclined him to pursue a course of which I could not approve, I was careful to keep my opinions to myself, and generally excused myself, on the score of ignorance of the customs of the country, from advising in that particular case.

A very notable instance of the ingenuity with which I was able to turn to my advantage the most unpromising circumstances occurred in connection with a project which Aurungzebe had long nourished in secret, and which he put into execution during my sojourn at the Court. This event took place about four months after those tragical events which I have related. I was still liable to fits of melancholy, but I had recovered from the first violence of my grief, and I was engaged in an attempt to drown, by the assiduity of my attendance at Court, the ever-recurring recollection of my sorrow.

Not to be too long-winded in explanation, I shall premise that the law of Islam enacts that a poll-tax shall be levied upon all unbelievers who are subject to a Mohammedan power. This poll-tax, or *jizya*, as the lingo hath it, had always been levied by the ancestors of Aurungzebe up to the reign of his

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great-grandfather. That Princee abolished it, for it was vehemently resented by the Indous; and the Mogul was the more ready to remit the unpopular tax in that he himself had never professed any veneration for the Mussalman creed. His son and grandson were both more or less of his way of thinking, hence the obnoxious levy had not been re-imposed. But Aurungzebe was of a very different temper. He was indeed animated by a degree of fiery zeal which was remarkable even in a Mussalman, and his conscience had long pricked him for not complying with the law of Islam in this particular. He had constantly threatened to re-impose the jizya; but his counsellors, who viewed with alarm the hostile attitude of the Indous, had hitherto been able to restrain him from doing so. However, as often happens, religious fanaticism grew upon him as his age advanced, until he would no longer hold his hand; and at length, on an occasion of great ceremony, he announced publicly that he was determined to collect the jizya again, and thus purge himself of his offence against Islam.

I was present when this important announcement was made. To the Emperor his project was a matter of the highest moment, and he therefore chose one of those great festivals when all the nobles and other important personages were assembled from far and near. Indeed, I believe that of all the great ceremonies I witnessed this was the most splendid, and for that reason I think it proper to give some description of a scene which can never have been surpassed in brilliance.

Although the Emperor had throughout his life entertained such a disgust of all outward pomps

and magnificence that he would have preferred to live with the utmost simplicity and austerity, he was of too politic a nature to curtail in any way the grandeur of the Imperial Court. Indeed, it would have been the height of folly if he had done so, for the stability of the Mogul rule rests not less upon the veneration which this magnificence arouses in the minds of the Indians than upon their military superiority. Hence, on all occasions of importance Aurungzebe took care to display a truly regal magnificence, and on the occasion of which I speak no efforts had been spared in this direction, so that I, who have been familiar with the most brilliant Courts of Europe, was obliged to confess that I had never seen a spectacle of such incomparable splendour—an admission which gave Aurungzebe the highest gratification.

The Conqueror of the World received his courtiers in the great Marble Hall of Audience, and when I entered this apartment the extraordinary richness of the decorations, and the magnificent dresses of the Omrahs, caused me a great deal of astonishment. No sooner, however, did my eyes fall upon the world-famous Peacock Throne, upon which the Emperor was seated, than I decided that by comparison with it all the magnificence around me was tawdry and contemptible.

The Easterns are unable to sit with comfort in the posture which is usual with us, preferring rather to double up the legs beneath the body than to allow them to hang down as we do. Hence chairs are not used, and the Peacock Throne is made in the form of a bed, surmounted by a dome-shaped canopy, which rests upon twelve pillars. The

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whole framework of this bed, the massive gold feet upon which it stands as well as the columns supporting the canopy, are so thickly encrusted with precious stones of every kind—diamonds, rubies, pearls, and many others—that it is impossible to distinguish the material of which it is composed. Moreover, amongst these lesser gems, which are nevertheless of considerable size, are a number of clusters, shaped like crosses, of immense jewels of incomparable size and splendour. Many of these greater stones are, indeed, of the bigness of a walnut and upwards. The canopy, like the rest of the throne, is thickly encrusted with jewels, and is fringed with pearls. And above it, the supreme glory of this marvellous object, is the full-sized figure of a peacock, made of solid gold. The tail is raised and outspread, and is set with a multitude of flashing gems, and in the centre of the breast is an immense ruby.

It is impossible to convey a just idea of the extraordinary magnificence of the Peacock Throne and of the marvellous radiance emitted by the countless jewels, each of which I should suppose to be worth a King's ransom. Indeed, I should have hesitated to describe it, knowing full well that malicious persons are always ready to cast doubt upon every account of matters beyond their limited knowledge, and to dub such as travellers' tales. But, fortunately, I am not the only traveller who has seen and described the Throne, for the French physician Bernier, of whom I heard a great deal at Court, has recently made public a description of it which tallies very well with mine, though I have found him inexact in some particulars.

The furnishings of the great Hall of Audience were of a richness to astonish the eye on any other occasion, but, for my part, my attention was fixed upon the Peacock Throne, upon which the Emperor Álamgir, Conqueror of the World, reclined, supported by three cushions of crimson silk. As usual, his own costume was plain, though of the finest and richest materials, and the jewels he wore were few, though of great size and value. But all the Omrahs were dressed with the greatest magnificence. All of them—Moguls, Turks, Arabs and Gentiles—from the greatest to the least, had endeavoured to make the most splendid appearance that their wealth or their poverty permitted; their robes of cloth of gold, and fine linen embroidered with the richest silks, were alone of great value. In their turbans, and upon the hilts and scabbards of the weapons which they carried in their girdles, were set countless jewels, and many of them wore ropes of large pearls around their necks; indeed, there were gathered together in that place such vast numbers of gems as I should have supposed the whole world did not contain. Moreover, in addition to those which they wore, each of the great Omrahs brought to Aurungzebe a valuable jewel as a gift, while the lesser nobles presented purses containing from two thousand down to twenty gold pieces. It is customary for all the nobles and officers of the Court to make these presents to the Emperor, and in this way his treasure, which is already vast, is constantly being replenished. Yet I have heard persons of grave understanding, who had opportunities of knowing the real state of the case, assert that, notwithstanding his store of jewels and rarities of all

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kinds and the immense revenues which he collects from the countries which own his sway, the charges which he is under the necessity of defraying are so heavy that he is constantly hard put to it to lay his hands upon any considerable sum of money.

In the midst of all this splendour I flatter myself that I made no contemptible figure, for I have been gifted by Providence with a fine appearance, and I had been at considerable pains on this occasion to make a display worthy of my position. I had been graciously permitted for some time past to stand within the rails surrounding the Throne, a position which only the greatest nobles are privileged to occupy, and as I stood there I was conscious that many a glance of admiration and envy was cast at the gallant Frank, who had risen to the highest position at the Court with such unheard-of rapidity.

It had been understood by all those who knew the secrets of the Court that on this occasion Aurungzebe was to make an important announcement of his policy, and when he began to speak of his intention to reimpose the *jizya*, all the nobles listened with the greatest attention. Looking round at their faces, I instantly perceived that the announcement was unwelcome, and when the Emperor had finished there was silence. Generally the Omrahs received his speeches with acclamations and cries of astonishment and admiration, whatever their real feelings might be; but all of them knew very well how serious were likely to be the consequences of the action which the Emperor proposed to take, and on this occasion they had the temerity to show by their silence that they disapproved. Aurungzebe perceived this, and, his kingly temper being ill-able

to brook opposition, he began to question them one by one as to their opinion.

Few of them ventured to speak out plainly, yet every one made some sort of protest. I watched the Emperor, and observed his countenance growing blacker every moment. Every unfavourable answer made me rejoice, for I saw that here was an opportunity, such as rarely came, of ingratiating myself with that great Prince. At last my turn came, and Aurungzebe imperiously demanded to know my opinion. I had fully determined on what course I should adopt, and in reply to my Sovereign's question I delivered myself of the following speech :—

“ Ornament of the Throne, your Majesty is aware that I have not been long resident in this country, and therefore have but little knowledge of those problems of government to which your Majesty has devoted so much study. In these circumstances, it would ill-become me to advance opinions upon a subject of which I am so ignorant. I have no other means of judging than by what I hear and see around me, and in this case I observe that all these distinguished noblemen, persons of the greatest learning and authority, are opposed to the course your Majesty has suggested. For my part, I should not venture to set my opinion against theirs in a case of so much difficulty, and if there were nothing else to be considered I should readily fall in with their judgment. But your Majesty has plainly informed the Court that you believe your proposal is right, and in view of this declaration I am unable to understand how anyone can be found to think otherwise. I have ever held that the duty of a faithful servant is, not to think, but to act; he

should be content to leave all decisions to his Prince, than whom no one can be better qualified to judge. Your Majesty has graciously stated that the jizya is to be re-imposed ; that is sufficient, and all wise men will exercise themselves in considerations as to how the command may best be carried out, rather than in questioning the wisdom of the decision. From the fact that all these Omrahs view your Majesty's command with dislike, I am led to suppose that the imposition of the tax is likely to lead to some considerable difficulty and danger, and, although I am a devoted supporter of your rule, yet I view this prospect with gratification, for where there is danger there will also be opportunities for me to prove that your Highness possesses at least one faithful and devoted servant who thinks no difficulties or perils too great for him to face in the service of so gracious a Master."

This ingenious speech had the happiest effect upon the Emperor. It was, indeed, a rare thing for the Great Mogul to find himself opposed by his courtiers, and their disapproval had enraged him ; the more so because the imposition of the jizya was a matter so near to his heart. On hearing my speech he relaxed the heavy frown which had darkened his countenance, and he bestowed upon me some gracious words of commendation, which gave me the highest satisfaction. The Omrahs, seeing how matters stood, now endeavoured to follow my example, and one and all began to protest their loyalty in the most servile and contemptible manner. But Aurungzebe very properly disregarded them. He had sufficient penetration to see that their protestations sprang from a mean desire to

ingratiate themselves with him; they had earned his just displeasure by their opposition, and he would not now listen to their disingenuous words. It had been left to me to declare that, under all circumstances, in wisdom or folly, I was prepared to put my own opinions on one side, and with a whole heart devote myself faithfully to the service of the gracious Prince, my Master. Thus, by the exercise of a little timely wisdom, I secured for myself a place in the Emperor's regard which months of assiduous stratagems might have failed to obtain.

I believe that my loyal support in this matter had great influence in persuading the Emperor to prosecute his designs, for I do not imagine that he would have imposed the tax against the advice of all his Ministers if he had not felt that there was one at least, and he not the most inconsiderable, who would support him. For, in spite of his commanding nature and his impatience of opposition, this sagacious Prince never allowed his wishes to outweigh his discretion. Expediency was his first consideration, and however ardent his desire to re-impose the *jizya*, he knew very well that a Sovereign who obliges his servants to act against their own judgment is guilty of the folly of weakening those instruments upon which he has to rely, for, with the best will in the world, a man will carry out but ill a command which he believes to be rash and ill-advised. Thus it will be understood how wise was my action in the matter, and how great the advantage it secured to me; for Aurungzebe came to regard me as the sole instrument by which the dearest wish of his heart had been accomplished, and by his subsequent usage of me he showed me

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that whenever he desired to find a servant whom he could believe to be incorruptible, and reliable in the most difficult and dangerous services, his thoughts naturally turned to me.

This matter of the *jizya* did indeed produce some troubles, for the Gentiles regarded the tax with the most fanatical detestation. There were riots and rebellions in many plaees; in some of the remoter districts the people stubbornly refused to submit, and had the temerity to ill-use, and even to slay, the officers who were sent to collect the tax. Even in Agra, where there was so great a force of Moguls, and where the people were overawed by the Imperial troops, the fury of the heathen could not be entirely controlled. Nay, some of the more reckless even went so far as to exhibit their dissatisfaction in the presenee of the Emperor himself, and on several occasions when he went abroad to visit some mosque without the fort vast crowds of Gentiles collected and greeted him as he passed with eries of execration. Once, when I was in his train, a number of fakirs burst through the guards which surrounded him and east themselves beneath the feet of his elephant, with some notion, I suppose, of shaking his resolution by proving to him the desperate nature of their resistance. But Aurungzebe was not to be deterred from carrying out his will, and although I was siekened, as I believe most of the Omrahs were, by the cracking of bones and the spurting of blood as the vast feet of the elephants pressed upon the bodies of these devoted wretches, the Emperor preserved an unmoved countenance, and, without showing any marks of agitation, commanded his guards to close up, and threatened them

with his displeasure if they should allow the heathen to break through their ranks again. I could not but regard his fortitude with astonishment and admiration, for his merciful disposition was notorious, and though some of the Mogul Emperors would have regarded such a scene with satisfaction, as a tribute to their power, I knew that Aurungzebe could not contemplate the useless destruction even of fanatical heathen without grief. But he was determined to permit no opposition to his commands, and on his return to the fort he called me into his presence.

“Cánar Sahib,” he said, “you have protested your loyalty, and your readiness to obey me, in such terms as have convinced me that I can rely upon you. I have therefore determined to place under your command a body of five hundred soldiers, with whom I desire you instantly to proceed through the city and to pacify the inhabitants. You have my authority to suppress every sign of resistance with the utmost severity, and for any harsh measures you may find it necessary to employ I grant you in advance full absolution.”

This errand did not please me at all. I had no fancy for cutting down helpless and unarmed citizens, whose religious zeal had driven them to commit the folly of rebellion, and I understood very well that if I appeared publicly in such a matter the measures which I had taken to obtain popularity would be defeated. But if I had allowed a difficulty of this kind to disconcert me, I should never have risen as I did at the Mogul Court, where nothing is more necessary than an appearance of instant compliance with the Emperor's slightest whim. I therefore signified my readiness to carry

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out his commands and my gratitude that he should have chosen me for the service. I then left his presence to take the necessary measures.

I now found the advantage of having a Mogul officer attached to me, for I was able to hand over my disagreeable command to Mirza Khan, with entire confidence that he would take my place successfully. I repeated the Emperor's wishes to him, and added to them my desire that he would use no more violence than might be necessary. I commanded him, on pain of forfeiting my favour for ever, to make no mention of my name in the matter, but to let it appear that he had an independent command over the troops. He promised to do as I wished, and I then secluded myself in my private apartments to await his return. After some hours he came and reported that all disturbances were at an end, and he pleased me very greatly by adding that he had attained this happy result at the expense of only two lives, though a good number of Gentiles had been wounded. I commended his diligence and discretion, and, having rewarded him, I went before the Emperor and reported that the city had been pacified. I would not have it supposed that in this matter I was guilty of any culpable deception, for certainly the Emperor cared nothing as to who executed his wishes so long as the result was what he desired.

I could not forget that Mirza Khan was publicly known as my officer, and that my reputation for benevolence might be somewhat injured by his action in the matter. Moreover, in considering these occurrences, I could not but be struck by the extraordinary fanaticism of the Gentiles which could

lead them to resist a decree of the Great Mogul, and I bethought me that it could do me no harm to make some efforts to stand well with these heathen and to remove any unfortunate effect which the employment of my officer against them might have had, seeing that their numbers are inconceivable, and that, in some parts of Indoustan at least, they exercise great power, though in the Mogul city of Agra they are downtrodden. True, I did not suppose they could be of much use to me while I occupied my present splendid position, but I could never forget that I had powerful enemies, who were constantly scheming for my overthrow, and it was certainly not impossible that I might at some future time be in need of help. When we are in trouble it sometimes occurs that humble persons can render us services which are not in the power of the great; this was a fact I knew very well, and I therefore determined to lose no opportunity of endearing myself to the Gentiles.

As I have described, I already enjoyed their favour to some extent by reason of my magnificent progresses, for there is nothing that delights this people more than pomps and ceremonies. Besides, my politeness to some of their philosophers had certainly recommended me to their affections; and I had presently an opportunity of rendering a more substantial service to one of these originals, which I did not neglect to use, though it is true that my action in this matter was prompted rather by my pitiful and sympathetic nature than by the dictates of policy. How constantly do we observe that some trifling act of mercy or condescension will bring to the doer unexpectedly a tenfold reward! So it was

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in this case. I thought little of the matter at the time, but, as will duly be set forth, when I fell upon evil days this little act of kindness was to stand me in good stead.

It chanced on a certain day that my occasions took me into the city, and, as I did not desire to be observed, I went privately, on foot, with only Mirza Khan and another attendant. As I was returning through the bazaars, my attention was attracted by a disturbance, and, seeing a crowd of persons, I made my way towards them, being willing to divert myself with some sport. I found that the uproar was occasioned by some Mogul officers, who were quarrelling with one of those extraordinary Gentile fakirs, whose filthy and repulsive appearance is an indication of their excessive sanctity. I know not what was the cause of the quarrel, but I saw at least that the Indou was at the mercy of the officers, for he was alone save for his two disciples, hang-dog fellows who would not venture to interfere; and, although many score of Indous stood watching, and murmuring at the arrogance of the Moguls, they were too much in dread of their masters to protect the saint.

As I came up one of the Moguls, being enraged at a retort of the philosopher, seized him by his matted beard, and, dragging his head very cruelly from side to side, struck him some heavy blows with his fist. This shameful mishandling of a solitary old man instantly aroused my anger, which was increased when I perceived that the other officers followed the example of their companion, and, closing around the saint, began to hustle him.

I resolved that I would put a stop to this brutality,

and although I had no force with me to support my commands, I recognised in the Moguls some ill-conditioned officers who hung about the Court, performing all kinds of despicable errands; and supposing that they would know me, I did not doubt but that on my ordering them to desist they would immediately do so. I therefore thrust aside the on-lookers, and, forcing my way into the centre of the crowd, I seized two of the officers, and hurling them aside, I called upon their fellows instantly to give over their barbarous conduct. The authority of my tones had the effect of making them pause; but it seemed that they did not recognise me, and so far from treating my commands with respect, they turned upon me, and, cursing me for my interference, advanced upon me in a very threatening posture. I felt uneasy, for I had no desire to engage in a public brawl with fellows of their kidney; but fortunately one of them recognised me, and warned his comrades. They stood still at once, looking sufficiently sheepish, and feeling very glad, no doubt, that they had gone no further in their insolent resistance to the authority of a great Omrah. Seeing that they were submissive, I reproached them for their cruelty, and having read them a lesson upon the wickedness of attacking a helpless old man, and of violating the Emperor's wishes by creating a disturbance in the city, I ordered them to depart, which they did immediately, thinking themselves well out of it, I have no doubt. I then went up to the fakir, and assisted him to rise, for they had thrown him down, and finding that he had not received any serious injury, though he was sadly bruised, I offered him that sovereign balm for hurts of this kind, a gold

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piece. He accepted this very readily, and protested his gratitude for my protection. I directed him to be more careful in the future, and to abstain from annoying the Moguls, for, I told him, he might come off worse another time. He promised amendment, and finding that he was now recovered from his shaking, I bade him be off about his business. However, he went but a little way off, and then began to follow me; and as for the onlookers, they could not conceal their satisfaction at seeing the Moguls routed, and nothing would content them but they must escort me home under the leadership of the fakir, making the air ring with their plaudits and praises of my benevolence. I was not at all displeased with this demonstration, for I reflected that it could not but further my project of enlisting the affections of the Gentoos in my behalf.

Those who know me will suppose that I must constantly have exercised my power in this fashion to protect the weak. Such was indeed the case, and I should not have considered it necessary to relate this trifling incident, but that it had an important result at a later time; and I found that my opportune assistance to the saint procured me the means of escaping from a difficulty. At the moment I anticipated no such result, and although the saint had murmured a promise that he would reward me, if it should be in his power to do so at any time, I paid but little heed to him, and soon put the matter out of my mind.

CHAPTER V.

NATHOO AND HIS FATHER. MIRZA KHAN'S TALE.

FOR several months after this no very notable incidents took place, so far as I was concerned. It was for me a time of peace and prosperity; my enemies seemed to have abandoned, for the moment, their schemes against me, and although I did not permit their inactivity to persuade me to relax my vigilance—for I saw in it but the gathering of forces for a yet more resolute attack—I was enabled to devote the most of my attention to the object which had led me to the East, and which I had ever kept steadily in view—namely, the acquisition of a fortune. I was now at the highest point of my fame. By my witty conversation, no less than by the material services I had rendered him, I had so recommended myself to my Imperial master that my position seemed assured. I permitted my fancy to paint the future in the brightest hues, and I looked forward to retiring, after a few years, covered with honours, and loaded with those riches which I had come to the Indies to obtain.

My wealth, indeed, was already considerable, for I had diligently used all such opportunities as that which I have described. My prosperity was daily increasing, as it was based upon virtue, the surest of all foundations. For indeed, there is but one way to obtain either fortune or happiness: innocence, guided and controlled by an acute judgment, must in the end attain success, despite the assaults of fortune, or the machinations of enemies. We see

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the wicked for ever weaving their futile webs of craft and stratagem; for a while, it may be, they prosper, but their downfall is certain. Purity is more powerful than guile, and simplicity than deceit. It is upon this belief that I have ever based my conduct, and I attribute the prosperity to which I have attained to the innocence of my motives. True, had my courage been less resolute, my fertility of resource less instant, I might not have gone so far, for these were the weapons with which I had to oppose every difficulty; but they would have been powerless but for the purity of the spirit which guided them.

If any doubt the truth of these contentions, let them mark how it was with me. By my diligence in his service, my instant readiness to perform whatsoever he should command, and my unswerving loyalty to his interests, the Emperor soon recognised that of all the great nobles of the Court none was a more faithful servant than I. It is not then to be wondered at that he showed me a degree of favour such as he advanced to no one else, and in this circumstance I directly found my account. For seeing how the Emperor loved me, and how he granted my requests more readily than those of any Omrah, no man who had a wrong to be corrected, a boon to crave, or a petition of any kind to be presented, would be satisfied unless he could engage my support. Hence my services became so valuable that many persons would offer me the last coins they could scrape together to induce me to uphold their cause, with which assistance they confidently expected that their outlay would be returned to them tenfold.

Those who bear me ill-will have not hesitated to

suggest that in these matters my conduct was corrupt, and that I was guilty of the detestable offence of accepting bribes. If any reader of these Memoirs should suppose that these accusations have any better foundation than such as commonly supports the suggestions of the ill-disposed, I affirm in the most solemn manner that they are false. The truth is, that I did no more than comply with the system which had been instituted by Aurungzebe himself. That prudent and sagacious monarch had a disgust to making direct payments out of his treasury, and in order to avoid this, and also in some degree to relieve the pressure that was caused by the vast number of supplicants who daily attended his public audiences, he had directed that every petitioner should be introduced by one or other of the Omrahs. In this way, without any expense to himself, he provided for the payment of his officers—for every supplicant endeavoured to engage his patron's interest by the magnificence of his presents—and brought into order the confusion which had previously obstructed the transaction of business. By this ingenious stratagem the ends of Justice were served no less than those of convenience; for if the Emperor had paid his officers himself he would have been under the necessity of raising fresh funds by increased taxation, which would have fallen on all alike; whereas, by the plan he adopted, only those paid anything who desired some benefit at his hands.

As soon as my fortune began to be considerable, I cast about me for some safe way of disposing of it, so that in the event of any untoward accident I might at least be assured of preserving what I had gained with so much labour. For those who have

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moved among the intrigues and stratagems of Courts know too well that the favour of Princes is not to be relied upon. To him who possesses the confidence of his Sovereign will be entrusted the most arduous and perilous duties. The higher we climb upon the mountain peaks of fame, the greater are the risks of falling. But how rarely is a man of spirit to be deterred by such reflections from adventuring even upon the most perilous undertakings!

In spite of the fact that I had endeared myself to the Emperor, and that he had the greatest pleasure in hearing me converse, I did not allow myself to suppose that his protection would avail me anything if at any time I should need it. For Aurungzebe was of so kingly a temper that he had not hesitated to subject his own sons to the most rigorous imprisonment when polity had seemed to demand it, although he entertained the warmest affection for them. 'Twas little likely, then, that I should receive more gentle treatment at his hands; and I understood very well that in any danger I must not look to him for help or protection. Keeping this fact in view, and recollecting that my enemies were ever plotting for my downfall, I determined to secure my fortune in a spot where I could easily come at it if at any time I should be forced to fly from the Court.

To this end I began to make large purchases of diamonds and other precious stones, considering that in no other commodity could I secure so large a value in so small a bulk. By degrees, taking advantage of every opportunity, I invested the whole of my fortune in this kind of merchandise, until I had stones worth, perhaps, five lacs of rupees. There was another advantage in this plan, for I had no

doubt that when I could bring them to Europe I should receive for them not less than ten times the value which the Indous placed upon them ; so that a collection of stones which here would represent but a moderate sum would be worth a vast fortune in Europe. I had a small and very strong iron case made, in which I packed my gems, and this I deposited in a certain place outside the city, using so much secrecy and circumspection that not even my faithful Nathoo had any notion as to its whereabouts. I took the further precaution of changing the hiding-place each time I had occasion to add to my collection, lest some prying fellow, seeing me go frequently to one place, should become suspicious.

It will be understood that I did not arrive at the height of prosperity and Imperial favour which I have described without arousing the jealousy and ill-will of the Omrahs, who could not endure that a Frank, and, as they would say, an infidel, should be preferred before them, and in so short a time out-strip them all in magnificence and power. But their own interest forbade them to show these feelings, and in all outward matters they treated me with the most distinguished respect ; nay, those who at first had been ready to scorn me as an adventurer now lost no opportunity of engaging my good-will.

But before I attained to my position of unquestioned superiority, I had many passages with the more stubborn among them, and it was my success in these encounters, no less than my credit with the Emperor, which made them shy of opposing me. Many were the attempts which they made to take me down before Aurungzebe, but the ready wit of an Irish gentleman never suffered them to gain the

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least advantage over me. Wazir Ali often joined in these attacks, and my contempt for him was increased by the ease with which I parried his thrusts. On one occasion he thought to discomfort me by pressing me on the subject of religion, thinking that he would so contrive matters that I must either become an apostate or offend the Emperor by publicly expressing my dissatisfaction with the Mussalman faith. After plying me with many ingenious arguments, designed to show that his was the true way of thinking, he concluded with these words, which he promised himself that I should be unable to answer. "I can add no stronger reason," he said, "than this—by becoming a true servant of Allah, you will not only obtain entrance into the Paradise prepared for true believers, but you will give the strongest gratification to His Gracious Majesty the Conqueror of the World."

"True," I replied, "and for your desire to secure for His Majesty this gratification you deserve the highest credit. Such zeal is truly honourable, but I venture to think that in supposing that your arguments can persuade me, when those of the Emperor himself have not yet attained that end, you are guilty of presumption; for surely you cannot imagine your understanding to be more subtle than that of our Imperial Master?"

Aurungzebe, who had been listening without interposing any remarks, burst into a hearty fit of laughter at this ingenious speech; for though he was still anxious that I should become a convert, he understood perfectly that my enemy's words had been prompted by a wish to discommode me, rather than by zeal in the cause of Islam; and he had

derived a sarcastical diversion, as I believe he often did, from the spectacle of a courtier intriguing to supplant a rival in his favour. As for Wazir Ali, he was completely disconcerted; he began to protest his loyalty and submission, and to disclaim any such presumption as I had imputed to him; but the Emperor would not hear him. He therefore became silent, and shortly afterwards left the Audience, regretting, as he had often done before, his boldness in crossing swords with the unconquerable Cánar Sahib.

How different from the behaviour of these courtiers was that of my two principal officers, Mirza Khan and Nathoo! Sure, no man ever had more faithful servants than these men, who had no point in common save the love they bore to their master. True, it was to their interest to be faithful, for both of them owed their prosperity to me, and they might not unreasonably look for some further benefits at my hands; but I am persuaded that apart from such considerations they regarded me with real affection. Indeed, the event proved that I was right, for both of them subsequently gave me the strongest proofs of their attachment.

I shall here relate an incident that occurred about this time which was sufficient to show that Nathoo was fully sensible of the honour I had done him. It chanced one day when I had need of his services at an unusual hour that he was not to be found, and when at length he reappeared I upbraided him with a good deal of warmth. The fellow made some excuse, which I accepted, and thought no more of the matter; but on the following day he was again absent at the same hour. I thought that I could

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perceive some confusion in his manner when he excused himself, but I took care to give no sign of having noticed it, being determined that I would ascertain the nature of his business. The next day, therefore, I set a man to watch, directing him to give me notice if Nathoo should leave his quarters. When the same hour came round this fellow appeared, and informed me that my servant had just set forth, carrying a bundle, in a certain direction. I started at once to follow, and made such good haste that I quickly caught sight of him, whereupon I moderated my exertions, and followed at a distance, taking care not to be observed.

He led me out of the city, and struck into a path which was very little frequented. It led to a collection of the most miserable hovels conceivable, where dwelt some of the lowest outcasts of the city. Into one of these, more ruinous even than the rest, he disappeared, and this action filled me with astonishment, for, although he was of low caste, he was very clean and particular in his habits, and generally showed a great dislike to do anything which would soil his clothes.

As he did not come out again, I approached the hovel, and was about to creep cautiously up to the doorway, to observe what he might be at, but the place was so crazy that there were plenty of holes through which I could peer with less risk of being discovered. Placing my eye close to one of these apertures, I looked through, and saw a sight at once so ludicrous and so pathological that I could hardly refrain from uttering an exclamation.

Nathoo was crouching in front of a very aged man, gray-haired and bearded, and was busily occu-

pied in putting food into his mouth. At first I had much ado to contain my laughter, for this old man, whom I should suppose to have lived at least eighty years, exactly imitated a child in the like situation. He opened his toothless gums wide, and stretched his neck eagerly for each mouthful, eating fast and very dirtily. When some of the mess which Nathoo was giving him ran down from the corner of his mouth into his beard, he whined, without making the least effort to help himself, and presented that side of his face to Nathoo to be wiped. All the while his hands lay idle by his side, nor would he raise them for an instant to perform the most necessary services.

At last he had had enough, and Nathoo, putting the food away, brought water to cleanse his lips and beard, which were plentifully besprinkled with food owing to his careless and greedy fashion of eating. And now I repented of my mirth, for I suddenly perceived what his helplessness should have revealed to me, that the old fellow was perfectly blind. The affair now took on another aspect, and what had seemed to me ridiculous, now became pathological; and I wondered exceedingly as I watched the pious care with which my knave ministered to this helpless old man, the patience with which he endured his childish complaints, and the reverent skill with which he supplied his every want. I perceived that some uncommon bond of affection must exist between this odd couple, for the perfect trust and reliance which the ancient displayed in the piety of the other were no less remarkable than the complaisance of his son, as I guessed him to be. Indeed, no suckling babe was ever more certain of having his

needs supplied, nor any mother more compliant to the demands of her offspring, than were this childish parent and his fatherly son.

I did not desire to intrude upon the scene, and, guessing by his motions that Nathoo was about to come forth, I hastened away, and, arriving at my quarters, I gave orders that so soon as he should return he was to be brought to me. It was not long before he appeared, looking sufficiently sheepish, and showing in his countenance that he expected to be rated for his absence. But I disappointed him, for, dismissing all my attendants, I addressed him in a tone of gracious mildness. "Do not be afraid," I said, "for I have sent for you for no other reason than to discover who is that old man to whom I saw you ministering; and why do you steal away in this fashion, as though about to commit a crime, rather than to accomplish an act of piety?"

At that the silly fellow dropped upon his knees and fell to blubbering, joining his hands in the attitude of prayer and entreating that I would forgive him. I was excessively surprised at his behaviour, and with considerable asperity I desired him to inform me instantly what he meant.

"Protector of the Universe," he replied, "I am your slave; therefore I entreat your Highness will pardon my offence. As to that reprobate old man, he is my father."

"Is that indeed so?" I cried. "I am certain that you have practised some deceit in this matter, for I recollect very well that when I engaged you at Surat you informed me that your village was near that place. How comes your father in Agra, then?"

“ Alas, lord ! ” he replied, “ I confess that I have done evil in this matter, for I ought not to have brought him hither. But you are to consider, Master, that I had been raised by your benevolence to a position of wealth and dignity. After that came news that the old man was destitute, and, although I sent him some money for his needs, I discovered that it was seized by the head-man of the village, who would not suffer him to receive it. So I sent for him, in order that I might support him. I would beseech you to reflect that he is very old, and I fear also diseased, and he will certainly die before long.”

“ Why, then, did you not bring him to your own quarters ? ” I demanded.

“ Nay, lord,” the fellow replied in astonishment ; “ how could I bring a poor old man, blind and perhaps leprous, among the servants of a great noble ? That would be a shameful action. It would be said, ‘ Behold, the Cárar Sahib has for servants decrepit old men, blind and diseased ! He is then a person of no rank.’ In this way your honour’s credit would be diminished through the most humble of your servants. Bearing these things in mind, I have established him in an empty hut in the place you know of ; and I have used the greatest caution, so that none save your Highness knows that I have aught to do with such a disgraceful old man.”

On hearing this I considered for a while, and then said : “ I desire to see your father, therefore go instantly and bring him before me.”

He protested, and used every argument to dissuade me, but I commanded him to bring the old man at once, and at length he went unwillingly.

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For my part, I knew not whether to be pleased with his loyalty and the care he had exercised to avoid bringing discredit upon me, or shocked that he should have left his father in such a miserable hovel. But I reflected upon the piety and tenderness with which he had ministered to the needs of the ancient, and concluded that his actions had been prompted by no hardness of heart, but rather by gratitude to me and a sense of respect for the benevolent master who had raised him from indigence to his present state of prosperity.

When at length this odd couple appeared before me, I could not forbear to burst into a hearty fit of laughter. The old man, who was certainly one of the most repulsive objects I have ever seen, was oppressed with so great an access of humility that he could hardly be persuaded to come into the presence of so great a noble as myself, whom no doubt he considered to be a kind of Prince. He made so many obeisances as caused me to marvel that he could find, in that shrunken frame, sufficient vigour to enable him to continue bowing for so long. Moreover, being perfectly blind, his genuflexions, which were intended for me, were addressed to Nathoo and to the attendants with the greatest impartiality. As for Nathoo, what with his desire to placate me, and to appease the resentment which he supposed I must nourish, and his reluctance to treat his aged parent with harshness, he fell into a thousand awkwardnesses.

The old man was perfectly childish; he clung to Nathoo, and whether through fear or from a notion that not being able to see me he could not communicate with me, he was not to be persuaded to reply

directly to my questions. Each time I spoke he desired his son, in a cracked and trembling voice, to inform him what the Maharajah had said, and in the same way he addressed his replies to Nathoo, who repeated them to me.

It would be tedious to repeat a conversation carried on in this way, and, moreover, I was hardly able to obtain any information from him. He had no idea whatever as to how old he was. He had a fixed idea that he could have been brought before so great a noble for no other reason than to answer for some crime, and I perceived that he was rack-ing his senile brain to find out wherein he had offended. To dispel this idea and to inspire him with some confidence, I asked him whether he would like to enter my service. Thereupon, being relieved of his fears, he fell upon the ground before me, and was taken with such a fit of maudlin weeping that he had to be removed.

I discovered, as I had expected, that he was no leper; but that hunger, dirt, and old age were the only diseases from which he suffered. I gave Nathoo orders that he was to be lodged among my people and well cared for; and after he had been cleansed and tended for a few days he revived, though he did not regain either his sight or his wits. I bestowed upon the old fellow an imaginary post in my household, and endowed him with a small stipend, which sufficed for his humble needs, in order that he might not feel himself to be dependent upon charity. This gracious action caused him the most excessive delight, and both he and Nathoo conceived such a sense of gratitude that I am persuaded they would cheerfully have yielded their lives in

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my service. The old man had no idea that I had entertained him from charity, and he could not understand that his functions were any less essential to me than those of his son. Finding nothing else to do, he accompanied Nathoo whenever the latter attended on me, and tried to show his zeal by urging his son to greater assiduity in my service, and rating him soundly for his tardiness and sloth, though I shall do my fellow the justice to observe that there was rarely any occasion for the censure which he endured so patiently at the hands of his parent. I found a great deal of amusement in watching the aged man and listening to his simple conversation; I encouraged him to wait upon me with Nathoo, and I was careful not to disappoint him by letting him perceive that his services to me were imaginary. But, alas! not all my benevolence could withstand the decrees of nature, for after two months the old man sickened, and although Nathoo tended him with the most pious care, and wore himself out in unavailing efforts to recover him, he died. I was very much grieved at this unfortunate event, for I had conceived a kind of affection for the venerable oddity. However, I consoled myself with the reflection that I had been able to render his last days comfortable.

Between my good Nathoo and my principal officer, Mirza Khan, a great deal of jealousy existed. There was, indeed, no other bond between them than the fact that each entertained an affection for his master, whereas every consideration of religion and race inclined him to detest the other. Nathoo believed that he had the highest claim on my regard, since he had been with me longer than the Mogul,

and had supported me through all those perils which I had endured on my lonely journey to Agra, when I was beset by wild beasts and in danger of perishing from hunger. Mirza Khan, on his side, claimed superior consideration on the ground that in any emergency or danger I should look to him for help rather than to a cowardly Gentoo; and this was, indeed, not far from the truth. Moreover, he despised Nathoo for a heathen and a member of the conquered race, who were held in so little respect by the Moguls.

It might have been supposed that either of these fellows, being devoted to my interests, would rejoice in the knowledge that I had another faithful supporter besides himself. But 'twas not so, for so oddly are men constituted that their affection for me was only equalled by the hatred they entertained for each other.

The truth is, that they were both indispensable to me; and though Mirza Khan, who commanded my couriers and guards, was more to be relied on in moments of peril, yet there were many affairs in which I could ill have spared the affectionate services of Nathoo. I confess that I was not above diverting myself at times by making them display their jealousy and requesting them to render services to each other which both considered degrading. I found it excessively amusing to observe, at such times, how they were distracted between reluctance to fail in rendering me the instant obedience to which I was accustomed and disgust at what I would have them do. But although I amused myself in this way, I never pressed the matter so far as to oblige them to do anything that might be

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repugnant to their religion or customs, and it was partly owing to my consideration in such matters that I was able to secure their unswerving loyalty.

In addition to the duties which he had to perform, I found Mirza Khan useful to me as a companion whenever I was low-spirited, for by nature a Mogul is more agreeable to a Christian gentleman than is a Gentoo. I always took him with me when I went a-hunting or when I rode abroad for diversion, and at such times I would engage him in conversation or require him to relate to me one of those quaint tales of which the Moguls are so fond, and of which he knew a great number. I shall here set down one of these histories, which he told me at a time when I was still much oppressed by the recollection of the tragic fate of the Lady Kishna, so that I was very ready to listen to any tale which offered to divert my mind from my sorrow.

MIRZA KHAN'S TALE.

In a certain country there was once a cobbler. In his youth he had been of an amorous nature and a lover of moon-faced beauties; he also loved wine, and spent his days and his nights with gay companions, rioting and rejoicing. In this manner he expended all his substance, until there was left to him naught but a single piece of gold. And when he found that wealth had deserted him he grew avaricious; abandoning wine and gallantry, he applied himself to his trade, and presently earned an amount of wealth equal to that which he had expended. But by this time the habit of avarice had become rooted in him, so that the greater his wealth became the greater also became his greed.

Now, in his old age the cobbler took a beautiful wife. She was, indeed, one of those of whom the poet Nafzawi tells us that their beauty is intended by Allah to foreshadow the delights of the Faithful in Paradise. She was slender as the letter Alif, or as a willow twig, and her beauty was a snare to the servants of Allah. But the Compassionate, whose Name be exalted, endowed her with virtue equal to her beauty, so that in all that country there was none so beautiful and none so chaste.

For a whole year the cobbler loved his wife and treated her kindly, for her beauty caused the warmth of his youth to revive. But when the year was at an end his fires of love burned themselves out, for he was old, and his avarice returned. And being one without honour, he bethought him how he might increase his wealth.

Now it was the custom for the Prince of that country to go past the cobbler's house on certain days, on his way to the Mosque. And the cobbler thought upon this, and he recalled how the Prince was one full of courage, a lover of wine, and of a gay spirit. In his harem were three hundred slaves, each surpassing the moon in beauty; and it was an order in that country that no female slave of a greater value than a thousand pieces of gold might be sold until first the Prince's officers had seen her, whether she might be fitted for the Prince's harem. And that Prince was a just and merciful ruler, and the property of every man in his dominions was safe—his merchandise, his male and female slaves, and everything he had. The Prince would seize nothing belonging to one of his subjects, unless he gave him full compensation.

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And the cobbler thought long upon these matters, till his avarice might no longer be denied. Thereupon he called his wife to him and said, "Be thou in the way on the morrow when the Prince goeth past, and when his eyes shall fall upon thee, do thou raise the corner of thy veil, so that he may see thy beauty."

And she that was virtuous answered, "To hear is to obey, O my husband; but there is great evil in this matter. Wherefore shall I show the Prince that which is another's? Perchance he may desire what it is not lawful for him to have."

But the cobbler replied, "Do thou as I have commanded thee." And she answered, "It is done."

And on the morrow the cobbler's wife stood in the doorway; and when the Prince rode past, surrounded by his officers and guarded by armed men, she raised one corner of her veil, so as to permit the eye of the Prince to fall upon her.

'Twas like the sun shining forth suddenly from behind a cloud! It was as when the misty veil is withdrawn from before the moon, and her beams shine out dazzlingly. It was like the dawn, when the darkness rolls back from the face of a fair prospect. When the Prince saw her beauty—'twas but a glimpse, for the cobbler's wife dropped her veil quickly—he became as one who has drunk deep of rose-scented wine. He cried, "There is no strength nor power but in God, the Compassionate, the Merciful! And sure this is one of the Spouses of Paradise." And he gazed long, halting in the road, and hoping that the cobbler's wife would raise her veil again.

And when she would not, he called one of his eunuchs, and said, "Discover the name of yonder damsel." And the eunuch answered, "Which damsel, my lord?" "Oh, thou of disgraced parentage!" cried the Prince; "she yonder, who is like the moon in her beauty."

So the eunuch approached the damsel, but she was afraid and withdrew into the house. Then he questioned the bystanders, and they told him, "She is the wife of Inat Hosein, the cobbler; men say of her that she is more beautiful than the houris of Paradise, and more virtuous than a pregnant doe."

So the eunuch followed the Prince, who had now reached the Mosque. And when he had returned to the Palace the eunuch revealed to him what the bystanders had said—how that the woman was a wife, and virtuous. When the Prince heard those words his heart was contracted, and he fell into a swoon. He was a just Prince and a merciful; Allah had softened his heart, so that he would not seize any man's wife; nor would he send a husband upon dangerous errands, so that he might be free to take the woman of his desire. So that which the eunuch had told him caused him to swoon with grief, and in the violence of his sorrow he caused him who had brought these evil tidings to be beaten upon the feet.

And for three days after that he would not eat nor sleep, but wept unceasingly. And after three days he sent a messenger privily to the cobbler's house, praying the woman to yield herself to him. But she would not.

Then the Prince went himself to the cobbler's house and besought her to yield herself to him, for that he feared lest he should die because of his love.

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Then the cobbler's wife answered, "O my lord, I may not yield me to thy love, for I am a wife!"

And when he still besought her, saying that her beauty had sore stricken him with the Arrow of Love, so that his heart was contracted, she replied, "Great is thy power, lord. I may not do this evil thing; yet if it must be, I will tell thee how thou canst possess me."

And when he asked how that might be, she said, "All things are in thy power, lord. I will not yield to thee, nor will I give thee my love. But thou hast the power of life and death; if it pleaseth thee, thou canst seize me from my husband. Him canst thou put to death, or send him to a far country, where it may be that his death shall find him. Thus canst thou possess me, and I shall remain free from sin." This she said, knowing that he would not.

Then the Prince exclaimed: "Verily there is no strength nor power but in God, whose Name be exalted! O woman, great is thy virtue! Thirty years have I sat upon the throne, and I have never done an unjust action. I have put no man to death, save only for evil-doing. I have used wisely the power which Allah has placed in my hand. Now therefore I swear by the Head of the Prophet—on whom be peace—that I will not employ force against thee, nor against thy husband; nor ever seek to taste with thee the joys of Paradise, save only if thou shalt yield thyself freely unto me, because of love."

And the Prince rose up and left her, and returned to the Palace, and his heart was contracted with grief because of the cobbler's wife. And he abjured the use of wine, and he would not taste of curious dishes, nor would he sport with his maidens, nor

hear music. Every night he passed in weeping and lamentation, and every day he went to the cobbler's wife and importuned her, but she returned the same answer.

Now when the cobbler knew these things he went to his wife and said, "When the Prince shall come to thee on the morrow, do thou say to him, 'I will yield me unto thee for this day only for a thousand pieces of gold.' And each day thou shalt do this, and I shall obtain great riches."

But the cobbler's wife grieved when she heard these words, and she said, "Dost thou, my husband, require me to do this evil thing? Wallah! thou art a shameless old man—an offence to the servants of God."

But he answered, "Do thou as I have commanded thee."

And she replied, "I will not."

Then the cobbler was angry, and he abused her, and heaped evil words upon her, and he took a stick and beat her. And because of his blows she wept, and two tears grew and hung upon her eyes, and they gathered and brimmed over. And they fell upon the ground and rolled to the feet of the cobbler. And he took them up, and lo! they were two pearls, perfect and round, each the counterpart of the other. So the poet sings:—

Like springs in the thirsty desert are the tears of
radiant girls,
But those that well from virtue's eyes are like to
glistening pearls.

Then the cobbler was astonished, and he looked at the pearls and saw that they were of great size and value, and he wrapped them away in his turban.

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And he went out into the bazaar, to the shop of a jeweller, and bargained with him for them from mid-day until night. And for each pearl he received one thousand pieces of gold, and he returned to his house, vowing that the jeweller had robbed him.

And after that the cobbler beat his wife every day, so that she wept; and each day she shed two tears, and each was a pearl. And at first he took the pearls day by day to the jeweller, but afterwards he kept them, that he might match them and obtain greater wealth.

Now her life became wearisome to his wife by reason of his constant beatings, and she bethought her how she might end it. At length she went to a certain wise old woman, and having related her case, she asked for help.

The old woman asked her, "Dost thou love the Prince?"

And she said, "Nay."

Then the old woman said, "Verily I see that Allah—whose name be exalted—hath laid His Hand upon thee, and hath changed thy tears into pearls as a reward for thy virtue, that perchance thy husband's heart might be softened toward thee. Know then, that if thou shouldst put off thy chastity, nay, if even thy heart should incline lovingly to a man other than thy husband, this gift would be withdrawn from thee. Then wouldst thou weep tears of bitter water, and those pearls which thy husband hath would become each of them a poisonous serpent. And the serpents would devour him, and thou wouldst be free from his cruelty. Incline, therefore, thy heart toward the Prince, and thou shalt be delivered from thy sorrow."

But the cobbler's wife replied, "Nay, this evil can I not do. Rather will I bend my shoulders each day to the rod than incline my heart to dishonour."

The old woman answered, "Thy virtue is above that of women. Yet maybe I can assist thee. Go thou to thy home, and on the morrow, when thy husband shall approach to beat thee, do thou thus, and thus." And she told the cobbler's wife what she would have her do.

And the cobbler's wife promised that she would do as the old woman had commanded, and she arose and went to her husband's house. But when she was gone the old woman went privily to the Palace and desired audience of the Prince. And when she was brought before him she inquired, "O Prince, is thy love for the cobbler's wife so great that thou wouldst suffer pain and humiliation for her sake?" And he replied, "Ay, all things will I do for her sake, save only that I will not break the oath which I swear unto her."

Then the old woman answered, "O Prince among Princes, Allah exalt thee! Lo! it is revealed unto me that on the morrow the cobbler and his wife shall come before thee, and the woman will ask certain things of thee. Do thou all that she requireth, even to the least little thing; and it may be that thou shalt attain thy desire."

And on the morrow, when the cobbler would have beaten his wife, she said to him, "Stay thy hand."

And when he asked her wherefore, she replied, "Know that the Prince sent to me yesterday, and commanded me that when thou shouldst make ready to beat me I should desire thee to stay thy hand, and should say to thee 'The Prince requireth

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thee to go with me before him and to beat me in his presence. Also the Prince desireth thee to take with thee all thy pearls, that he may see them.' Now therefore, O my husband, make ready to come with me before him."

Then was the cobbler fearful, for he dreaded lest the Prince should seize from him his wife that was beautiful and his pearls that were without price. But he ventured not to disobey the commands of the Prince, in whose hands rested the issues of life and death. So he made ready and set forth, and came before the Prince with his wife.

Then did the woman cast herself on the ground before the throne, and say, "My lord, exalted be thy seat! Allah—whose name be praised—have thee in his keeping! I come before thee praying for succour."

The Prince replied, "Speak without fear."

"My lord," said the woman, "know that Allah hath set his hand upon me, and hath congealed the springs of bitterness in mine eyes and hath changed my salt tears into pearls. When I would weep, twin pearls fall from my eyes, round and beautiful, instead of tears; and because of this, each day this avaricious old man, who is my husband, beateth me, that he may gather up the pearls and be enriched. Now therefore I am come before thee, praying thee to relieve me."

And the Prince was astonished, and said, "Is this indeed so? Show me the pearls, then, that I may know that it is true." And the cobbler showed him the pearls; and after the Prince had returned them to him he strung them around his neck.

Then the Prince said, "Beat me this woman that I may see this marvel, and worship God."

But the woman cast herself again upon the ground before him and said, "Lord, my shoulders are sore with many stripes. Spare me this day, for I have been beaten many times." And she withdrew a corner of her veil, so that the eye of the Prince lighted upon her beauty, and his love returned and he was nigh to swooning.

And he said, "Verily I can deny thee nothing, for my love for thee is greater than my desire to see this marvel."

Then did the cobbler's wife arise and stand before him, and she cast her veil upon the ground and exposed the wondrous beauty of her face and form. And all were amazed at her loveliness; and the Prince gazed upon her, and his heart so hungered for her that his breath was stayed, and he could not speak.

Then the woman said, "My lord, dost thou truly love me?"

And the Prince answered, "Thou knowest that I love thee. There is nothing I would not do to possess thee."

Then the woman said, "Much, perhaps, wouldst thou do to possess me, but how much to relieve me?"

And the Prince answered, "To the point of breaking my oath, I would do all things to relieve thee."

And she said, "O my lord, if thou dost truly love me, offer thyself in my place for this one day: bare thy shoulders to my husband's rod, and take my stripes upon thee."

The power of his love was upon the Prince, so

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that he could refuse her naught. He arose and stepped down from the throne, and cast off the upper portion of his clothing, and having bared his shoulders, he said to the cobbler, "Lay thou on, now, and spare thy wife this day."

But the cobbler feared to do so, and he said, "Nay. It is not fitting that I should raise my hand against the Prince."

But the Prince said unto him, "Fear not. Do thou as I have commanded thee, and it shall be pardoned because of the love I bear to thy wife."

Then the cobbler took heart, and he said to himself, "Never has it befallen me to score the soft back of a Prince. May Allah—whose Name be exalted—strengthen my arm, and let me be cursed if I do not make him dance."

And he lifted his rod and brought it down upon the bent shoulders of the Prince. And he laid on right lustily, so that the blood spurted from the Prince's back and bespattered those who stood around.

And a little drop of blood fell upon the woman's sleeve, and she raised her arm and looked at it. And as she did so, on a sudden her heart was changed, and she loved the Prince, who bled for her, to spare her the stripes that were due. And she cried out, "O my lord, sure I love thee now, because thou hast taken my stripes upon thee." And she wept with sorrow that the Prince should suffer pain and humiliation because of her; and her tears streamed down her face, and one wetted her lip, and she tasted it, and it was bitter water.

So it happened as the wise woman had predicted; for when love for the Prince filled her heart the

gift of Allah was withdrawn from her, and her tears were pearls no longer. And she looked up and saw the cobbler with his rod uplifted to deliver his final blow. But his arm was stayed, for there was a hissing around his neck. And as he paused, rod in air, the pearls burst open, and serpents issued from them and wound themselves around his neck. And he shrieked and fell upon the ground, and the serpents caressed him with poisonous lips, so that he died of their kisses.

And all were greatly afraid; and the Prince sat upon his throne and said, "I have seen strange things this day."

But the woman came and knelt before him, and she said, "My lord, dost thou still love me?" And he answered, "By the blood upon my shoulders thou mayest know that I love thee."

Said the woman, "By that same blood of thine my heart has turned toward thee, and is filled with the love of thee. Now behold, my husband is dead, and thou mayest take me without sin."

So he took her and wed her, and she bare him many sons.

CHAPTER VI.

EXTRAORDINARY DISCERNMENT OF THE EMPEROR, WHO ENTRUSTS
ME WITH A MISSION OF THE GREATEST DELICACY.

It is strange that however faithfully a dependent may serve us, his fidelity will never engage our confidence to such a degree that an appearance of treachery will not arouse our suspicions against him. Indeed, I have found that there is but one thing that will inspire such a confidence as cannot be shaken by the most adverse-seeming circumstances; that is, to be led, through some inopportune combination of events, to doubt the loyalty of one whom we have previously trusted. If then we discover that our suspicions are groundless, and that where he has seemed to act crookedly he has really, beneath the deceptive mask of events but imperfectly comprehended, maintained an impregnable fidelity, we conceive such a conviction of his integrity as nothing can ever assail: we regard him as a blade that has been proved; and a dread lest we may again be led into a like error, and a generous regret that we should have injured him by our unjust suspicions, make us impervious to any future doubts.

It was an event of this nature which led me to regard my officer Mirza Khan as my most faithful ally. It chanced that one day the Hakim Fazal Khan was attended to the Court by a numerous body of retainers; and passing near these fellows and regarding them idly, I was excessively astonished to see, as I supposed, my own man Mirza Khan among them. Going nearer, with intent to ask what he

did there in the train of my most inveterate foe, I discovered in time that the man was not indeed Mirza Khan ; but the resemblance between them was so notable that I could not doubt but that they were brothers. Some careful inquiries assured me that this was indeed the case ; and this discovery caused me considerable disquietude. That my principal officer and confidant should be the brother of a man in the service of one whom I knew to be bent upon my overthrow, was a sufficient ground for uneasiness. I was well aware of the treacherous nature of the Moguls, who are so corrupt and faithless that a gentleman can never feel certain that he has not among his servants one who is paid to act in the interests of his foes ; and I could not but fear that there might be some secret correspondence between Mirza Khan and his brother, and that I had perhaps given my confidences to one who would betray me. Cases of this kind occurred daily at the Court, and such was the atmosphere of intrigue and treachery in which I lived, that I was constantly on the watch for some stratagem of a similar nature directed against myself.

Every kind of deceit is hateful to me, and in the indignation which my discovery aroused, I was for taxing my man with the treachery of which I supposed him to be guilty. But I reflected that nothing can be more advantageous than to know the quarter from which danger may be expected, and I understood that if I should drive away Mirza Khan, I should be doing myself an injury ; for he would certainly be replaced by some other instrument, whom I might not succeed in detecting, and I should thus be in a position of greater danger than before.

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An unknown foe is one whose power is doubled; discovery robs him of his most dangerous weapon. I resolved that I would not do my enemies the service of letting them see how much I knew; and I therefore determined that I would say nothing to Mirza Khan, but would rather seek to convince him of my trust in him, for in this way I hoped that he might become so careless as to expose to me the plots in which he was engaged. In pursuit of this design, I treated him with the utmost cordiality, and made such a show of confidence in him as I believed could not fail to convince him that I was without suspicion. At the same time, I watched him closely, and had no difficulty in ascertaining that he frequently conversed with his brother, and that on many occasions they went together into different houses in the city.

I shall not deny that the baseness and ingratitude of which I supposed him to be guilty affected my spirits, for there is nothing more distressing than to discover that one upon whom we have bestowed our affection, and whom we have treated with generosity, is unworthy of our benevolence. I had indeed conceived an affection for the fellow, and the discovery of his wickedness caused me to fall into a state of depression in which I was ready to declare that all men were traitors. If Mirza Khan had proved false, I reflected, what of Nathoo? Might it not be that he, too, was untrustworthy; that the marks of affection he displayed were assumed for the purpose of obtaining further benefits at my hand? Hitherto, amid the constant deceits and treacheries of the courtiers, my only consolation had been the thought that I had at least two supporters, humble though

they might be, who were yet sincerely attached to me, and would be as faithful to me if misfortune should overtake me as they had been in the day of my splendour. Now I saw myself robbed of this consolation. "Alas!" I thought, "of what use is your benevolence, since it cannot obtain for you the affection even of your own dependents? You have showered benefits upon these men, and they repay you with treachery. Would it not be better, then, to do as the other Omrahs do: to crush down those feelings of humanity and kindness which have hitherto animated you, and to direct your energies solely to your own advantage, regardless of what suffering you may cause to others?"

But I had little leisure to indulge these private griefs; for the Emperor, whose confidence in me had been greatly increased by my conduct in the matter of the jizya, now began to employ me more constantly in affairs of state, and particularly in those transactions which required the nicest discretion for their successful accomplishment. In these affairs I acquitted myself with so much prudence, that my gracious Master found me invaluable to him; and in proof of his reliance upon my qualities of discretion and integrity, he presently entrusted to me a mission of such delicacy that I am persuaded there was no other Omrah of the Court whom he would have considered capable of performing it.

I have already stated that the Great Mogul was a Prince of the most subtle discernment—indeed, I believe that I shall be forgiven for discovering a proof of this quality in the confidence which he placed in me. So great was his penetration, and so suspicious and distrustful the natural temper of his

mind, that I do not believe that he had ever been deceived by the crafty noblemen who surrounded him, or that he ever failed to see through the plots and stratagems which they were constantly weaving. Indeed, if ever he fell into an error, it was in the contrary direction ; for there can be little doubt that he was often too ready to perceive in the simplest actions of his Ministers and attendants some subtle and traitorous design which perhaps did not really exist.

This habit of constant watchfulness and suspicion was partly attributable to his natural character, and partly also to the circumstances of his accession to the throne. For it must be remembered that he had only secured the crown by disregarding those scruples which are held to be binding upon an ordinary gentleman, but which the exigencies of statecraft forbid an aspirant to an Eastern throne to observe too carefully. Under the pretext of protecting the late Emperor his father, he had dethroned and imprisoned him ; and he had further used the most subtle stratagems to compass the destruction of his brothers, in order that he might strengthen his hold upon the crown which he had seized. He had no mind to suffer himself the fate which he had inflicted upon those whom he considered his rivals ; and throughout his long reign he was a prey to a constant fear lest, having come by violence to the throne, he should be hurled from it in like manner.

His suspicions were principally directed against his own sons, and he subjected them to a continual supervision. While using every effort to flatter them, and to gain their affections, he surrounded them with persons who were attached to his own

interest, by whom their every word or action was reported to him. He appointed them to the command of armies; but fearful lest these armies should be directed against himself, he appointed trusty chieftains to share the chief command with them. In consequence of this treatment, his sons feared and hated him; and the eldest, Prince Mohammed Sultan, had some years previously so far forgotten the duty he owed his father, and the prudence with which it behoved him to act, that he had allowed himself to be drawn into a conspiracy against the Emperor. But those who had promised to support his cause, failed him; and the unhappy youth, seeing no prospect of accomplishing his designs, surrendered to Aurungzebe, who had imprisoned him in the rock citadel of Gualeor, about eighty miles from Agra, where he had been kept ever since.

But the Emperor was not content with confining his son; his distrustful mind led him to suspect that even in his prison the Prince was conspiring against him. He therefore so far relaxed the rigour of his treatment as to allow him to hold a Court in the citadel, which he took care should be frequented by persons who would faithfully report all that went on. Prince Mohammed was allowed the use of a considerable amount of money, and he had no other way of expending it than by lavishing it upon favourites, dancers, and all sorts of persons who repaid his generosity by acting as spies for the Emperor.

The service which Aurungzebe now entrusted to me had to do with this unhappy Prince. One day, about a month after my discovery in regard to Mirza

Khan, he summoned me into his presence ; and on my appearing before him, he directed me to approach the throne, at the same time requesting the Omrahs to retire out of hearing. He thereupon addressed me in terms of the highest commendation, praising my zeal and address in his service ; and finally he presented me with a valuable jewel. I was by now sufficiently acquainted with his habits to understand that he had need of my services, and I therefore answered respectfully that his praise gave me the greatest pleasure, and that I trusted that he would continue to make use of me.

“ You are doubtless aware,” said His Majesty, “ that I have found it necessary to put some measure of restraint upon the liberty of my son the Prince Mohammed Sultan, lest evil counsellors, and persons who desire to serve their own interests, should lead him into dangerous enterprises. The confinement, I fear, has had an unfortunate effect upon his health, and I have therefore determined to desire him to receive you into his establishment in the capacity of physician for a short time. Being aware of my solicitude for his health, you will not fail to make constant reports to me ; and it will also be your duty to observe whether the persons about him contribute to his maladies by inflaming his mind with foolish suggestions. You are to recollect that the welfare of my beloved son is of the highest importance to me ; and therefore you will give me full information as to any disturbing influences to which he may be subjected, in order that I may take immediate steps to remove them. You should endeavour to gain the good-will and confidence of the Prince, for by this means you will best be able to ensure his welfare.”

My bosom swelled with pride at the signal mark of his confidence which my gracious Master had just conferred upon me. I assured him in the most positive terms that he might fully rely upon my zeal and discretion. He was pleased to reply that my conduct had acquainted him with my merits, and that there was no one on whom he would so willingly rely in this delicate matter. He also informed me that as a recompense for my trouble, he had directed his treasurer to pay me the sum of five thousand rupees for each week I should be away.

I was so much affected by his generosity and condescension, that I was on the point of replying that I required no reward for my services other than his approbation, and that the consciousness which I hoped to gain of having carried out his wishes would be more precious to me than untold wealth. But I reflected that it would ill-accord with the dignity of a great Prince, that he should accept services without recompensing his agents; and I foresaw that he might perhaps resent a proposal which might seem to hint at unwillingness on his part to pay me for my efforts. I therefore checked the generous impulse, and contented myself with protesting once more my loyalty to his interests and my gratification at his condescension in selecting me for this service. He received my speech very graciously, and directed me to leave him, and to make all haste in preparing for my journey.

It will hardly be credited by the generous reader that there are persons so misguided, so blinded by envy and malice, that they have pretended to find, in the honourable commission with which I was

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charged, matter to support the accusations which ill-will has induced them to bring against me. This mission, the crowning proof of the Emperor's confidence in me, has been so misrepresented as to make it appear that I accepted the ignoble office of a spy. Were it not that there are persons who are ready to believe the most extravagant and baseless charges against a great man, I should hardly consider the matter deserving of mention. If any such should be among the readers of these Memoirs, I would say to them : " Read what I have already recounted, and what is yet to come, with attention, and note particularly the unfailing care with which a merciful Providence has preserved me in the most dreadful perils. That is a sufficient proof of my integrity ; for it is not to be supposed that a person guilty of such baseness as has been imputed to me, would be the object of the especial favour of heaven."

I set out on my journey, after having attended once more before the Emperor, to receive from him a letter of recommendation to the Prince Mohammed Sultan, together with some particular instructions as to the course I was to pursue. He granted me an escort of horsemen, and thus protected I accomplished the journey in five days without any untoward adventures. It was evening when I at length arrived at the wonderful fortress of Gualeor, which is set upon a jutting crag which springs suddenly up from the plain ; and on arriving at the foot of the eminence, I sent an embassy to announce my arrival to the Prince, and to inquire if he would be pleased to receive me.

The message was answered by an Omrah, who informed me that he was one of the Prince's chief

attendants. This person treated me with the most distinguished courtesy : he regretted that the Prince was unable to receive me before the morrow, being engaged upon some particular business ; but he stated that he had been instructed to take every means to ensure my comfort, and that of my officers and attendants. He conducted me to a set of apartments in the fortress, and he was very particular in doing everything he could to set me at ease. For my part, as became the principal favourite of the Emperor, I treated him with polite condescension, and did not scruple to give him commands as to the lodging of my suite. My bearing evidently impressed him with a notion of the exalted position which I occupied at the Court, and seeing that I was a person of influence, he devoted the remainder of the evening to entertaining me with an account of the Prince.

He told me that, although kept a rigid prisoner, Prince Mohammed Sultan was permitted to hold a Court of his own, having attendants and Ministers of every kind, and exercising full authority over them. The Emperor desired that his confinement should be made as agreeable as possible, that he might have the less temptation to escape from it ; and to this end he saw to it that he should have an unlimited supply of money, so that all those sensual pleasures in which Eastern Princes delight should be within his reach. Indeed, I discovered that the Prince held a Court which was an exact imitation of that of the Emperor, differing only in one particular ; namely, that the strict and pious behaviour which was exacted of the Omrahs at Agra, here gave place to a licentious freedom of speech and manners which I found excessively displeasing.

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On the morrow I was sent for by the Prince, and on entering his presence I found that he was a man past forty years of age, whose features and bearing showed signs of the nobility and exalted character which I had anticipated in the son of that great Ruler who had shown me so much favour. I cannot deny that I found the unhappy situation of this amiable Prince very affecting ; it was indeed painful to reflect that the exigencies of statecraft required that a man of so much sensibility as I afterwards found he possessed should pass the flower of his years in confinement. The distinguished courtesy with which he received me further engaged my sympathy on his behalf, and I determined that although my first care must be for the interests of the Emperor, I would yet devote some attention to the welfare of the Prince, and do what I could to alleviate the miseries of his wretched situation.

After paying me some compliments, which he did with a gentle and pleasing manner which I found excessively engaging, he desired me to state the nature of my errand. Thereupon I handed the Emperor's letter to him, and addressed him as follows : " Your Highness, His Majesty your father is concerned to hear some reports which indicate that your health is not as robust as he would desire. He believes that although you have made no complaint to him of illness, your silence is the result of your wish to spare him anxiety, rather than a proof that you are well. His Majesty has been pleased to appoint me to the post of physician to his Imperial person : and his desire for your welfare has caused him to direct me to present myself before you, and place at your disposal the knowledge and skill which I have acquired, and which by the mercy of Allah

have already succeeded in curing him of a distemper. For my part, I humbly desire Your Highness to look with favour upon me, and I beseech you to believe that I am ready to use the utmost efforts of which I am capable to serve you, and to attain that happy restoration of your health which is so ardently desired by the Emperor and by his faithful subjects."

I perceived that this speech affected him favourably; it was, indeed, designed to that end, for I was very well aware that his natural inclination would be to regard an ambassador from the Emperor with enmity. Knowing this, I was at some pains to show him, as much by my tone and expression as by my words, that I was favourably inclined to him; and I was the more ready to use every effort to engage his good-will, as I reflected that I could thus best carry out the wishes of my master. Nor indeed was the additional inducement lacking, which was supplied by those feelings of respect and sympathy which the unhappy situation of this amiable Prince must arouse in every gentleman of sensibility. I had the gratification of observing that the look of suspicion faded from his face as he listened to my speech, and he replied to me in a tone of greater cordiality than the nature of my errand could have led me to expect.

"I am obliged by the sentiments you have expressed," he said, "and I shall be happy to make use of your services as far as they are necessary. You may be certain that a nobleman whom the Emperor has favoured with his confidence, shall not want at my Court for the respect to which he is entitled. I hope that you will instantly inform me of anything that may be necessary to your comfort;

and it will give me pleasure if you will favour me with your company as often as may be convenient to you."

He then opened the Emperor's letter. I could not but mark the mournful expression which overspread his features as he read the words of that parent who cherished for him so real and ardent an affection, and who could yet, at the dictates of policy, treat him with so much harshness. "Alas!" I reflected, "how miserable is the fate of Princes, despite their exalted situation. Sure, you have cause to be thankful to the merciful Providence which has decreed that you should be born in the ranks of the nobility, rather than in those of royalty; for, however your qualities may have fitted you to adorn the highest positions, be sure that in no other situation than your own could you obtain the happiness you now enjoy."

When the Prince Mohammed Sultan had finished reading the letter, he addressed me again: "The Emperor has described your qualities, and the services you have rendered him, in terms of the highest commendation. Be sure that there is no way in which you could recommend yourself more highly to me, than by showing the utmost diligence in furthering the interests of my Imperial father. I have now something for your private ear." With that, he directed his attendants to go apart; and when we were alone, he put aside his formal manner and addressed me with so much kindness and sincerity, and at the same time with so much natural dignity, as affected me with the keenest sympathy for his misfortunes.

"Cánar Sahib," he said, "I am not ignorant of

the real nature of your errand. Although I entertain the strongest feelings of attachment to the Emperor, I am yet aware that if you serve him as he desires, you must to some degree be in opposition to myself. I entreat you, therefore, to lay aside all concealment for the moment, and to declare openly whether you support the Emperor's interests, or whether you may be won over to my side. You may speak without fear, since I cannot resent it if you prefer to remain loyal to your Master. Yet I should rejoice if I could attach to myself a gentleman of such qualities as I believe you possess."

"Your Highness," I replied, "I beseech you not to look upon me unfavourably if I declare that I am bound in honour to serve the Emperor with my utmost capacity. I assure you that such a declaration does not imply any measure of hostility to yourself: indeed, since the Emperor's only desire is for your Highness's welfare, I conceive that I can do you no greater service than by carrying out his wishes. I hope, therefore, that you will not consider me unfriendly to yourself, although I cannot deny that the instructions of my gracious Master must receive my first attention."

The Prince smiled mournfully. "Alas!" he replied, "I would that it were as you profess, and that there were no opposition between the Emperor's interests and my own. However, I do not blame you for your loyalty; and I shall only desire you to abstain from hostility as far as your duty may allow."

I am perhaps in danger of dwelling too fully upon my intercourse with this gracious Prince; for, indeed, that which is important to my story as affecting

my own interests, did not occur until the end of my stay at Gualeor. But the truth is, that the reception which he accorded me, no less than the courtesy with which he continued to treat me even after he was certain that I was opposed to him, moved me so greatly that I conceived an affection for him; and at the time I was tempted to regret that considerations of honour forbade me to attach myself to him. Although he took every precaution to conceal from me the intrigues and stratagems of his Court, and although it was my duty to use every effort to discover these matters, yet he did not appear to entertain any resentment against me. Indeed, he showed himself capable of that kind of conduct which is the highest proof of nobility and good breeding; that is to say, he could exert himself vigorously to oppose me, and to defeat my endeavours, without feeling the least personal rancour against me. We were at once friends and enemies, each striving to hoodwink and defeat his adversary and yet each ready, in all matters which did not concern his particular ends, to show courtesy to the other, and even to be at some pains to serve him.

I remained for three weeks at Gualeor, preparing the report which I was to make to the Emperor. I found, indeed, that his suspicions were not without foundation, though I am convinced that the Prince Mohammed Sultan, if left to himself, would not have conspired against his father, nor attempted to escape: but would rather have endeavoured to regain his liberty by proving to Aurungzebe, by the propriety of his conduct, that he had long since abandoned those unfilial and ambitious schemes which had been his undoing. But, unhappily, he formed

a convenient object for the schemes of all those who were discontented, and who, having nothing to lose, might hope to gain something by the overthrow of the present ruler. These persons obtained an influence over him by flattering him, and by indulging those licentious passions to which he was certainly too ready to give way. They surrounded him with beautiful and unscrupulous concubines, who were instructed to poison his mind, and to prepare him for the suggestions of the disaffected. He was encouraged to drink wine, which he was very ready to do, and in this way his judgment was still further weakened. His imprisonment was so irksome to him, that for very weariness, he was driven to occupy his time in amorous intrigues, drunken revels, and endless schemes of escape which never ripened to the point of action. Sure, no higher proof of his nobility of mind can be demanded, than the fact that in spite of these unfavourable influences, he remained gentle, honourable, and kindly in disposition.

By the use of some stratagems which I do not think it proper to describe in detail, I discovered the truth of these matters. It became apparent to me that there were not half a dozen persons among his attendants who were not venal : Ministers, couriers, personal servants, dancing girls, slaves, one and all were engaged in some intrigue or other. They were like leeches, clinging round the person of this unhappy Prince, draining him of money, and what was still worse, robbing him of peace, and of his power of judgment. All had some ends of their own to serve ; and not one among them had any mercy for their victim. It was not hard to discover who were the leaders of the various plots ; and I

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made careful note of the names of those persons who must be removed, before it could be hoped that the Prince could be freed from the influence of his evil counsellors.

But in spite of my success in these matters, it was strange that no hint of a more serious plot came to my ears : a plot which was on the point of fruition, and which would certainly have succeeded but for the loyalty of Mirza Khan, whom I had suspected of treachery. As I have already stated, I allowed him to perceive no marks of suspicion in my treatment of him. I affected to treat him as before. I even used him in my investigations, though I was careful not to act upon his reports until I had verified them, unknown to him, by independent evidence. I was still watching for some treacherous action on his part. I was now to receive a striking proof of the injustice of my suspicions.

He came to me one day when I had been at Gualeor for two weeks, and was looking forward to returning to Agra in a few days.

"Master," he said, "I believe that I have served you faithfully?"

"Faith, I hope that is so," I cried. "What then?"

"Why, Master," said the fellow, "if you are satisfied with me, I shall have more courage to request you to grant me a favour."

"And what is that?" I asked.

"Protector of the Universe, I have a brother——"

"Servant to Fazal Khan," says I, drily.

At that he discovered a good deal of astonishment, and, as I believed, some perturbation. "Yes, Master," he replied, "that is so, though I did not

suppose your Highness knew it. This fellow, whose name is Hassan, desires to enter your service. I am willing to be answerable for him, and I assure you that he will serve you faithfully."

Although I had not intended to acquaint Mirza Khan of my suspicions, his impudent proposal enraged me to such an extent as to make me unable to dissimulate my indignation. "What!" I roared, "do you desire me to admit the servant of my inveterate enemy to my confidence? I believe you think I am very simple. Is it not enough that I have one traitor in my household: am I to entertain his brother also? If you suppose that I am ignorant of your treachery, you are mistaken. I have known for some time of your correspondence with your brother: I understand perfectly that you are in the pay of Fazal Khan, though I have not thought proper to accuse you before."

The poor fellow looked at me with the utmost astonishment. "Master!" he stammered, "Master!" Then he fell upon his knees, at the same time drawing his sword. I sprang up, to put myself in some posture of defence, but 'twas the hilt he presented to me.

"Alas! Master," he cried, the tears streaming from his eyes, "I entreat you, plunge this weapon into my bosom, for I cannot endure to live. Have I served your Honour so faithfully to meet with no other reward than to be accused of betraying you?"

"What! have you the insolence to deny your treachery?" I cried.

"I beseech you to believe that I am no traitor, Master," he replied, clasping his hands with every mark of agitation. "I have served you with the

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utmost faithfulness, and have ever been ready to give my life for your advantage. I entreat you, slay me now, if you are unable to believe in me, for I cannot live dishonoured."

I confess that I was shaken by his vehemence, but I was not to be so easily convinced, and I was willing to prove him. "Your protestations of innocence will be of no avail," I replied, "for I have sufficient proof of your guilt."

"Master," he cried, "I do not know on what your doubts are founded, but I implore you that you will inform me, that I may resolve them."

"Why," says I, "has not your brother been all this time in the service of my most implacable foe? Have you not concealed this from me? I have had you watched, and I am very well aware of your visits together to different houses in the city. Without doubt you have been hatching some schemes against me."

"Why, Master," he said, "it is true that my brother has been employed by the hakim, but I did not willingly conceal this from you. I have three brothers, all serving different nobles of the Court, for my family have been engaged in this kind of service for several generations. Since I did not conceive there was anything strange in that, I never informed your Highness. As to my visits with him to the city, I was engaged in nothing more reprehensible than an attempt to induce him to leave the hakim and take service with you."

"Very well," says I; "what proof have you of this?"

At that he brightened up. "Ah! Master," he says, "I have forgotten. It is, indeed, in my power

to prove that my brother Hassan, no less than myself, desires to be of service to you. For he has arrived in this place from Agra, having abandoned the service of Fazal Khan, and he has brought me details of a plot in which that infamous physician is involved for assisting the Prince Mohammed Sultan to escape. He is so fully acquainted with the matter that, if you will believe him, it will be easy for you to frustrate their plans; and thus you will not only be enabled to avoid the anger and suspicion with which the Emperor would certainly regard you if you had failed to discover this intrigue, but you will be able to engage his gratitude by defeating it."

Here, indeed, was matter for consideration. I conceived that I had perhaps been mistaken after all. I therefore directed Mirza Khan to rise from his knees, and, handing his weapon back to him, I desired him to return it to its scabbard. "Listen," I said. "I do not desire to punish you unjustly. I shall therefore put your story to the proof; and since I shall certainly kill you if I am convinced of your treachery, I will engage, on the other hand, to entertain your brother if you should succeed in establishing the truth of your story. You are therefore to bring him before me instantly."

The poor fellow exhibited the liveliest gratification; indeed, by his confidence in his power to satisfy me, he went some way towards effecting that end. But I would not lay aside my suspicions without proof, for the matter was one in which my honour, and perhaps my life, was involved. Mirza Khan went out, and returned almost at once with his brother; and when I saw them together I could

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scarcely conceal my astonishment, for the resemblance they bore to each other was even more remarkable than I had supposed. Indeed, save that my knave was somewhat the older of the two, they could not have been distinguished.

Hassan saluted me very respectfully, and I told him that he might speak. His manner pleased me; he was certainly less polite than Mirza Khan, but there was a rude honesty about him which did not escape me. He began without hesitation to describe the plot he had discovered. To save time, I shall do no more than give the reader the gist of it.

It appeared that for some time past a plot had been brewing, the object of which was to assist the Prince to escape. Fazal Khan, having been approached, refused to join actively in the matter. For some reason which I do not understand he had not discovered it to the Emperor, though he would have gained great credit, and perhaps a large reward, for doing so. It may be, that with the circumspection of which he was so notable a practitioner, he recollected that Aurungzebe was growing old and might die before long; and, if the Prince Mohammed Sultan should then ascend the throne, he would be ruined if he had betrayed him. However that may be, he excused himself from giving assistance, but professed to regard the project with benevolence. But when I was sent to Gualeor, he was induced to abandon his neutrality by the prospect of doing me an ill-turn, conceiving that if the Prince should escape in spite of my investigation, I should be ruined; for it would either appear that I must be very dull not to have discovered the plot, or it might even be supposed that I had furthered it

treacherously; and I have no doubt that he would have endeavoured to present that view of the matter to His Majesty.

The plot was simple enough. The conspirators had reckoned that after my departure, the Imperial Guards, who were charged with the care of the Prince, would temporarily relax their vigilance, relieved at being freed from the constant supervision to which I had subjected them, in my endeavours to discover whether they were disaffected; and thus it was expected that the night following my departure would be the occasion of all others on which the Prince might most easily escape. It was arranged that he was to affect to be overtaken in liquor, and to retire to his sleeping chamber apparently intoxicated. He was then to assume at once the disguise of an officer of the Guards, and, with one trusty attendant, he was to walk openly through the fortress, to a spot where he could be lowered by a rope down a steep face of the rock. Six horsemen would be in waiting, and under their escort he was to ride to a rendezvous about twelve miles distant, where a troop of a hundred men would be ready to receive him. Thence he was to fly I know not whither, nor did this part of the scheme concern me. There were plenty of disaffected chieftains who would shelter him; and I understood very well that if he could once contrive to join the troop at the rendezvous, I should have but little chance of capturing him.

There were other details. A venal officer of the Guards had engaged to spread the report of his intoxication, so that the sentries should believe that there was no need for vigilance. Two dancing-

women were also concerned, their part being to engage the attention of the guards at two points where it was supposed that the Prince would have difficulty in passing. In short, no possible mischance had been overlooked, and I saw plainly that none other than the wily hakim could have conceived so subtle a plan. Hassan related the whole matter in a brief, abrupt manner, which enabled me to grasp the smallest details, and though I questioned him shrewdly, I could not make him contradict himself, even in the most trivial point.

As soon as I had heard the whole, I perceived that not only was it in my power to defeat the treacherous project, but that I might also perhaps succeed in procuring the downfall of my inveterate foe. With this end in view, I addressed Hassan encouragingly, and informed him that after I had taken certain measures to ascertain the truth of his story, I should proceed to lay my plans. I further directed him to hold himself in readiness to give evidence at the proper time as to the guilty complicity of Fazal Khan. I was excessively surprised when he told me very roundly that he would not do this.

“What!” I cried in astonishment, “do you suppose that I shall employ you when you have refused to perform the first service I require of you?”

“Master,” he answered, with a certain bold yet respectful manner which I could not but admire, “Do not ask me to do this. I have been the hakim’s man, and cannot betray him. Although I have left his service, and exposed his treacherous plot, yet I cannot do anything to injure him directly.”

I was but little used to have my commands disputed, and I was at first inclined to punish the fellow for his opposition. But although I so earnestly desired to compass the destruction of the treacherous hakim, yet, after a little reflection, I was pleased with the simple fellow's obstinacy. "For indeed," I said to myself, "you require an honourable man to serve you, not a knave; and if this poor fellow will keep faith even with a villain, how much more likely is it that he will be true to a gentleman of honour, such as yourself!" These reflections persuaded me to attend to Hassan's plea, and I therefore intimated that I should not require him to violate his conscience. I then directed him to retire with his brother, promising that if their story should prove to be true, I would take the one into my service and reinstate the other in my confidence.

I have already hinted that I had means, which I do not think it proper to disclose, of discovering what was going on in the fortress. By the use of my secret sources of information I very soon became convinced of Hassan's good faith: 'twas easy enough to pick up here and there an unimportant thread of the plot without arousing suspicion, and wherever I turned I found ready confirmation of his tale. In this way I satisfied myself that he had told the truth; and when all my doubts were set at rest, I summoned the brothers into my presence again. I informed Hassan of the satisfactory result of my investigations, and stated that he might henceforth consider himself as being attached to me. I then turned to Mirza Khan, and assured him that I no longer entertained the least doubt about him, and I intimated that, by way of recompensing him for

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my injurious suspicions, I should entrust to him a leading part in whatever plan I might adopt. The poor fellow's delight at being thus received again into the favour of the master whom he worshipped was very affecting : he assured me, with tears in his eyes, of his gratitude, and protested that if he could serve me at the cost of his own life, he was ready to do so. I did not forget, however, to reprove him for having kept secret from me the fact that his brother was employed by my enemy : " For," I said, " if you had told me of this I should never have suspected you."

CHAPTER VII.

I DEFEAT THE PLOT OF THE PRINCE MOHAMMED SULTAN BY MEANS OF A VERY SUBTLE STRATAGEM.

I HAD now to consider what action I should take ; and although I could readily have defeated the plot by removing, or arresting, those who were to take part in it, yet a little consideration assured me that I might perhaps take another course, which would equally serve the Emperor's interests and, at the same time, might produce a greater advantage to myself. For, although Aurungzebe's principal desire was to prevent his son's escape, yet I knew also that he desired to maintain, as far as possible, the dignity which properly belonged to the Prince Mohammed Sultan ; and I understood that if I could so arrange my plans that nothing should be publicly known of the matter, my credit with His Majesty would be increased. Besides, I had no desire to offend the Prince, and considerations of policy, no less than my affection for him, required that I should use every effort to preserve his dignity and avoid inflicting upon him any public humiliation.

I knew very well that if the ringleaders in the plot should be arrested, the matter could not be kept secret. There would be nods and smiles among the Omrahs at Court, and hints of " yet another attempt to escape," and in this way the Prince's credit would be injuriously affected. And besides, there was another consideration which influenced me ; for I perceived that if I could upset the hakim's

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plans in such a way that he could not be certain whether I had done so designedly or by accident, he would fall into a state of the greatest uneasiness, not knowing how much I had discovered nor what action I might secretly be pursuing against him. In default of a more complete revenge, I should, in this way, at least be able to cause him a great deal of discomfort; and, moreover, under the influence of fear, he might be led into some hasty action which would give me an advantage over him.

Bearing these things in mind, I had no difficulty in deciding what to do. I sent for Mirza Khan, and, reminding him of my promise, informed him that he was to set out instantly for Agra with a message to the Emperor. He discovered some disappointment when he heard this; no doubt he had hoped that he would be employed on some difficult or dangerous duty, and the honest fellow thought it hard that he should have to play no more distinguished a part than that of a mere messenger. But I consoled him by explaining that this letter for the Emperor was the very pivot of my scheme, and that everything depended upon its reaching Agra safely, and in no longer space of time than twenty-four hours; and I assured him that I had chosen him for this duty because there was none other whom I could trust in so secret and urgent a matter. This made him happy, and he protested that nothing short of the direct interposition of Allah should hinder him from accomplishing his mission. I then handed him the letter, and warning him that he must deliver it into the Emperor's own hands, I bade him set forth instantly.

There was no more for me to do at present than

to endeavour to prevent any suspicion from being aroused, and to this I applied myself. My departure was fixed for the seventh day, and during this week I exerted myself to the utmost to persuade the Prince that I was as thoroughly hoodwinked as he desired I should be. In these days the affection I had conceived for him was still further strengthened by his courtesy and kindness, and I should perhaps have felt some shame at the part I was to take against one who had used me so well, had I not reflected that I was doing no more than was required of me by my duty to my Imperial master. The truth is that, although my surroundings obliged me constantly to dissemble, in order to defeat the schemes of the courtiers who were ever desirous of gaining my place in the Emperor's affections, yet every kind of deceit was disgusting to my real nature. I would rather have relied upon my courage than upon my wits; and although the latter weapon was the one which had certainly gained for me my wonderful success, yet I often found its exercise irksome.

When I announced to Prince Mohammed Sultan that the day of my departure was fixed, he was good enough to express some sorrow at the prospect of parting with me; and, indeed, I had made myself so agreeable to him that I believe that he was actually sorry to lose me, although he was acute enough to understand that his schemes could make no progress while I remained there. But, as I have said, I believe that the cunning of his mercenary attendants was accountable for his indulgence in these conspiracies, rather than the natural inclination of his mind; if he had been left to himself he

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would have preferred to abandon all such crooked dealings, and it is certain that he found great pleasure in my society as a relief from that of deceitful persons, so rare was it for him to come in contact with an honest gentleman. However, intrigue had by now become habitual to him, and I could perceive, beneath his courtesy, that in spite of his affection for me, he was itching to have me gone. My secret knowledge enabled me fully to appreciate the reason of his impatience.

When I went to take my leave of him he paid me many compliments, and desired that I would accept from him a valuable jewel. Remembering what I had in hand against him, I was not sorry to have a reasonable excuse for refusing his offer. I expressed my gratitude for the honour he did me, but assured him that I could not receive the jewel at his hands, lest I should lay myself open to an accusation of corrupt dealing. I now put into execution a project I had formed of urging him to abandon his intrigues and to become reconciled to the Emperor, and, desiring the attendants to go aside, I addressed him as follows:—

“Your Highness, you are perhaps aware that the Emperor sent me hither, principally to discover whether the persons by whom you are surrounded are exercising a disturbing influence over you. I fear this is indeed the case, and I assure you that these persons are less devoted to you than you suppose; they have no other desire than to enrich themselves at your Highness's expense, and perhaps to embroil you, for their own purposes, with the Emperor. I venture to urge you, in the most respectful terms, to dismiss all those persons who

would persuade your Highness to join in their intrigues; if you would do this, I believe that I have sufficient influence with my gracious Master to effect a reconciliation between you. I should rejoice to see you once more in harmony with His Majesty, not only because you would be restored to the enjoyment of your liberty, but also because I should then be able to devote myself to your interests without disloyalty to my Sovereign. I entreat you to consider my words favourably."

The Prince smiled sadly as he replied. "You are a faithful servant, Cánar Sahib," he said, "and I would that you were on my side. I thank you for your good-will towards me, and I believe that your advice is honestly intended. However, you are mistaken in supposing that my good friends and attendants are engaged in conspiracies; in this matter I conceive that you have been misled by some persons who have an interest in deceiving you. I authorise you to assure the Emperor of my attachment to him, and to inform him that I am ready, as I have ever been, to become reconciled to him, if he will only abandon his injurious suspicions."

I perceived with sorrow that it was not possible to influence him; the habit of intrigue had become a part of his nature. I therefore made no further attempt, but took my leave of him, after the usual ceremonies. I returned to my quarters fully determined to carry into execution the scheme I had contrived; and all my arrangements being complete, I marshalled my escort and set forth in the direction of Agra.

I had not discovered my plans even to Hassan, who was to be a principal assistant; but I had

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instructed him to make himself well acquainted with my men, and to determine, as far as he could, which were the most reliable. When we had gone a sufficient distance from Gualeor—that is, half an ordinary day's march—and were come to a dense thicket well suited for my purpose, I called him to my side, and inquired whether he had done as I had ordered. He replied, yes; he had found six men of the escort whom he would be ready to trust, bold fellows, and, what was more important, silent, and little likely to talk. I commended his diligence, and directed him to separate these men and to bring them before me. When this had been done, I ordered a halt, and choosing one of the six, who seemed to be a masterly fellow, I placed the whole of my following under his command, and instructed him to continue the journey to the regular halting-place, and to encamp there until I should rejoin him. I gave him very stringent orders that he should allow no one to lag behind—for I wanted no spies—and I made him muster my people, so that he might assure himself, at the encampment, that none were missing. I then despatched him at once, and as soon as the party was out of sight, I rode into the thicket with Hassan and the five troopers, and choosing a secret place where we were hidden, I made them dismount.

We rested here in hiding until it became dark. I then made Hassan arouse the men, who were sleeping; and when they were mounted again, I made them a short speech, in which I described what they were to do. "We are now about to return to Gualeor, my brave fellows," I said. "At a certain spot at the foot of the rock six horsemen will

be waiting. Your business is to take each of you one of these men, coming upon them, if possible, unawares; you will kill them instantly, and I shall not consider you have played your part well unless you contrive to do this without a single cry being uttered. Silence and secrecy are the first considerations; but if any man among you should be so clumsy as to fail in slaying his opponent at once, understand that on no account is he to be allowed to escape. If but one man should get away, our plans are upset. Finally, recollect that no one is to speak."

They looked at me with a dull stupidity which pleased me mightily, for I have seen many a pretty stratagem ruined by some clever, meddling fellow. I repeated my instructions to them, and being satisfied that they understood, we set forth.

In less than three hours we were again under the overhanging rock of Gualeor, with two hours to spare before the time appointed for the Prince's escape. I halted my men, and directed Hassan to go on foot to reconnoitre. After a while he returned, and told me that five of the men were sleeping, and the horses tethered, while one fellow remained on guard. This was better fortune than I had dared to hope for, but it made it necessary for me to alter the plan of attack. After a little reflection, I made all the men dismount, and when they had tethered their horses, I bade them, in a whisper, proceed as follows. Hassan was to go ahead, the five troopers following, until they got within fifty yards of the enemy, which I reckoned they could do without being observed, for the night was, happily, very dark. They were then to lie down, and

Hassan, choosing a favourable opportunity, was to creep up to the sentry and endeavour to spring upon him unawares. If he should succeed in despatching him quietly, the troopers were to approach at their leisure, advancing on hands and knees, and acting all together, at a signal from Hassan, were to fall at once upon the sleeping men and slay them. If, however, the sentry should raise an outcry, they were to dash in at once, and endeavour to take their men at a disadvantage, before they had time to rise and draw their weapons.

I knew very well how easily such a scheme might miscarry; but it was necessary to take the risk. However, the event proved more favourable than I had expected, for Hassan reached the sentry without being observed, and sprang upon his back. I could not see very well what occurred, but I perceived that a struggle took place; and after a few moments Hassan stood up, alone: a dark heap lying at his feet. He raised his hand, and made the agreed signal, and the other men began to creep up. And here my scheme was within an ace of going astray, for the troopers did not precisely carry out my directions. Instead of keeping together, they acted independently; one man, who was in advance of his fellows, did not wait for the others, but rushed directly upon his enemy, and stabbed him where he lay. This hasty action might very easily have upset my plans; but the others were so close behind him that not more than a minute passed before they had done their work. Quick as they were, one shriek rang out—the most detestable sound that ever offended my ears. My heart beat violently as I waited, expecting each instant to hear,

from the rock above, a commotion which should announce that my plot had been discovered. Nevertheless, the minutes slipped by and nothing happened, and after waiting in suspense for some time, I became convinced that the cry had not attracted attention. I was excessively relieved; for if I had failed in carrying out my plot, I should have been ruined. As will presently be seen, the Emperor himself had a part to play; and failure on my part would have had the effect of giving him a hasty journey to no purpose, and even, perhaps, of making him look a little ridiculous; than which, I need not say, nothing could have been more fatal to my interests.

Hassan now came to the spot where I was concealed, to report his success; and not until he had assured me that all had gone right, did he inform me that he had been wounded by the sentry. I was excessively concerned to hear this, and was about to inquire whether his injury was serious, when he fell suddenly to the ground. I sprang from my horse to succour him, but alas! the stream which gushed from his side from a wound over which he had hitherto pressed his hand, assured me that his life was spent. I raised the poor fellow's head upon my knee, and strove to stanch the bleeding. 'Twas useless, however; he could do no more than raise his eyes to mine and show dumbly, by his grateful look, that he understood that I would have helped him if it had been possible. Then his head dropped suddenly, and his body slipped limply from my grasp; and without a word of farewell from me, or of thanks for his gallant service, he was gone.

This unhappy accident occasioned me the greatest

sorrow ; for, though I had seen so little of him, I had already conceived an affection for him. But I had no time for grieving ; his place must be filled by another man, and as soon as I had laid my hand upon his heart, and assured myself that he was indeed dead, and had composed his limbs and laid him decently to rest beneath a tree, I left him, and rode to the spot where the five men were waiting. I selected one to be the leader, choosing him by hazard, for I knew nothing about any of them ; and after repeating to him the instructions I had given to Hassan, I rode away, and concealed myself at a distance, in a spot which the Prince and his supposed escort must pass.

I had no hand in the next part of the plot, and I was obliged to trust to the discretion of the man I had selected as leader. However, everything was done as I had arranged. After about two hours, my men were hailed from above, and when they had given the watchword, which we had learned, the Prince Mohammed Sultan was lowered to them. He found nothing to excite his suspicions—for the dead men had been dragged out of sight—and springing upon the horse which was brought to him, he rode off, fully believing that the men who accompanied him were those who had been appointed to this duty by his fellow-conspirators. He did not address any of them, as it had been arranged that perfect silence was to be preserved, in order to avoid the risk of giving the alarm.

I waited in my hiding-place with what patience I could ; but the time seemed so long to me that I was almost persuaded that my plan had miscarried. But at length the trampling of horses

broke upon my ear; and after a few minutes six dark figures rode past me, the Prince and the leader of my men riding together in front. I allowed them to pass me, and then I rode out quietly, and came up with my men without attracting attention. The Prince never turned his head, though even if he had done so, the night was so dark that he could not have recognised me.

We rode on in silence for a long time, and I noted with satisfaction that little by little we were edging to the right, so that, instead of travelling in a straight line, we were going in a curve. The Prince never noticed this; indeed, our divergence was so slight and gradual that it could not have been appreciated, save by a man who was in the plot, or who knew the country intimately. Nevertheless, I thought it proper to ride up close behind the Prince, so that if he should become suspicious I might be in a position to frustrate any attempt at escape. However, I did not desire to discover myself to him, if I could avoid doing so, until the time should come for the climax to my plot.

After a while I observed, by the constant eager glances which the Prince cast around him, that he was becoming restless and uneasy. At last he spoke to the trooper beside him, and I was near enough to hear his words.

"O havildar-ji," he said, "are we not near the rendezvous?"

"Not yet, your Highness," said the fellow; "we have still a mile or two to go."

The Prince answered nothing; yet I could feel rather than see that he was becoming nervous. However, since everything had fallen out, so far,

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as he had been taught to expect, he had no cause for suspicion, and he settled down again in his saddle. I could guess the suspense and agitation which filled his mind, the eager hopes that at last he had got free from his long imprisonment, and the gnawing fear lest even now some untoward accident should thwart him; and though I was set upon disappointing him, I was yet able to feel sympathy for him, and to regret the fate which obliged me to play the part of his enemy.

I, too, began to look out eagerly now; and presently I saw, a little on the right, the shadowy outline of a great tent, or, as they call it, shamiana. Now was the time when I had most cause to fear trouble; but the leader of my men played bravely the part which had been so suddenly thrust upon him. The Prince saw the tent almost at the same moment as I, and he drew rein suddenly in surprise. "What is this?" he said sharply. "There was no arrangement for a tent to be erected. What does it mean?"

"'Tis the rendezvous, your Highness," said the trooper, with an admirable affectation of stupidity, which made my heart warm toward him. "I believe that some refreshment has been prepared. I see that our men are on the look-out, for there, your Highness, are some of them ready mounted."

His tone was so easy and natural that after a moment's hesitation the Prince laid aside his suspicions, and rode on again. As he approached the tent, the troopers who were standing there saluted him. At the same moment I gave the signal to my men to close behind him, and I rode up to his side.

“Your Highness,” says I quietly, “will you be pleased to dismount?”

Sure, 'twas a cruel shock of disappointment to him, though necessary, to avoid using violence to him. He was so much startled that for a moment, as he turned and stared at me without a word, he abandoned that concealment of his feelings which he usually maintained, and I could read in his eyes such bitter disappointment, such despairing sorrow, and at the same time so much reproach, that my heart bled for him. He was too much taken aback at first to do aught but stare at me; but as the shock passed I saw the dawning of a wild hope in his eyes as he cast a glance behind me, and saw it die away again and give place to a look of despair as he perceived the close ring of troopers all around him. I knew that for an instant he had conceived the notion of making a sudden wild dash past me, but no sooner had the idea occurred to him than he knew that it was hopeless. He turned to me again with a look of sullen anger.

“So you have betrayed me!” he said in a low voice.

“Not so, your Highness,” I replied respectfully, “I have done no more than rescue you from the hands of those who would have led you into danger. You are now perfectly safe: no harm will befall you; but I entreat your Highness to dismount and enter the tent, where we shall find some refreshment.”

He got down from his horse without a word, and walked slowly to the entrance, showing in his attitude so much dejection and weariness as once more aroused my pity. There was yet another surprise in store for him; and one which I hoped would

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perhaps to some extent reconcile him to the failure of his plot. For as we entered the tent a figure arose from a heap of cushions, and the Prince drew back in fear, and uttered a cry of alarm, as he perceived that it was the Emperor Aurungzebe himself. I believe he supposed that he was to be put to death; but when the Emperor advanced, holding out his hands, and embraced him, saying, in a tone of gracious mildness, "Welcome, my son; it is long since I have seen you," he burst into a flood of tears. I was not sorry to receive a sign from the Emperor to withdraw, for I had no desire to intrude during this affecting scene.

I do not know what passed between them, what tender reproaches on one side, what repentant admissions on the other. But after an hour, I was summoned again into the tent, and found the Emperor and his son to all appearance happily reconciled, for they were engaged in an intimate and friendly discourse. They both received me with the utmost graciousness, and the Emperor paid me some compliments upon the skill and delicacy with which I had conducted this difficult affair. "His Highness," he said, "is about to return to his residence at Gualcor, and I desire that you shall accompany him. On the morrow I shall send you certain instructions from Agra, which you will carry out as quickly as possible, and then return and present yourself before me."

Not to make too long a story of it, I shall briefly relate that the camp was now broken up, and the Emperor returned to the Imperial city of Agra, while the Prince and I, with a very strong guard, set out for Gualcor. The parting between the Emperor and his son was very affecting; indeed, the

Prince Mohammed Sultan shed tears on bidding his father farewell. I could not bring myself to question him in such a delicate matter, and he did not vouchsafe to give me any information; so that I do not know what means the Emperor had adopted to bring his son back to the path of filial duty. It is certain, however, that he had extracted some promise from him, for the Prince gave me to understand that he had, at least in the present instance, abandoned all hope or intention of escaping.

I had my instructions from the Emperor, and no sooner did we arrive under the rock of Gualeor—'twas light before we got there—than I directed the guard we had brought with us to seize all the principal leaders in the plot. Our arrival had created the utmost surprise and consternation, which was increased when the garrison perceived the Prince, whom they supposed to be far enough away, riding by my side. They knew not what to make of it, and in their confusion they did not attempt to resist our entrance. As soon as my men were in the fort, I ordered all the gates to be closed and guarded, so that no one should leave the place; and I then announced that all the officers of the fort were relieved of their posts by order of the Prince—for I took care to do everything in his name—and in their stead I appointed some of the men whom I had brought with me. On the next day, a considerable force arrived from Agra; and to the commander I handed over all my prisoners, who included every officer in the fort who had any knowledge of the plot. These officers were replaced by trusted servants of the Emperor, who had come from Agra for that purpose.

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Here the affair ended, for, being surrounded by trustworthy persons, there was no fear that the Prince would make any further attempts to escape. I therefore presented myself to take a second leave of him; and, in doing so, I ventured to express a hope that he did not resent the part I had played in the matter.

"Why no, Cárar Sahib," he said, "I do not blame you since you did no more than your duty. Indeed," he added, after making a little pause, "if the scheme was to fail, I believe that I owe you some thanks for having so contrived as to spare me the ridicule which might otherwise have fallen upon me. I arranged with the Emperor that all those persons in the fort who had not shared in the plot should be told that I left the fort with you, to escape a conspiracy directed against my life; and since you have been so prompt in confining all the conspirators, the truth has been successfully hidden. Indeed, perhaps this also was suggested by you to the Emperor?"

When I told him that was so, he smiled, and made a suitable profession of his gratitude. "You are not to suppose, however, that all the obligation is on my side," he said; "indeed, you owe me more than you understand. You formerly refused a gift which I offered you, but I believe that you can now receive this without hesitation." And he handed me a little gold case, very curiously wrought, wherein was set a ruby of great value. He desired me to open it, and I did so, and was excessively surprised to find that it contained nothing but a pinch of grayish powder.

"Ah! Cárar Sahib," said the Prince, smiling

at my confusion, "I perceive that you do not yet understand. Know then, that on the night before my escape, this powder was brought to me—I shall not say by whom—for the purpose of putting it into a dish of meat which was to be set before you. I was told that you were dangerous, and that this little pinch of dust would make it impossible for you ever to interpose in this or any other matter. Wallahi! I had but to open my fingers, and you would have found Release, for I ascertained afterwards that you devoured the very dish which had been brought to me. Sure, 'twas nothing but the friendship I felt for you that made me stay my hand. It would have brought us both release, Cánar Sahib: for me, release from this my prison; for you, a wider and more lasting freedom. I held my hand; and we are both prisoners still! Keep the powder; who knows? Some day it may yet unlock for you the door of Liberty!"

I was very much affected by this proof of his love for me, and I expressed my gratitude with a great deal of sincerity. It was thus with a friendly feeling upon both sides that we parted, although we had so lately been at variance. As I bade him farewell, I ventured to express a hope that I should soon see him at the Court at Agra; and I believe, indeed, that he had some expectation of this, by virtue of a bargain which he had struck with his father; but for some reason of which I am ignorant, the arrangement was not carried out, and he remained a prisoner.

I found my fellows waiting for me at the appointed spot; among them Mirza Khan, who, I found, had already learned of his brother's death.

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He concealed his grief with that fortitude which the Easterns practice to such an extraordinary extent; but I perceived indeed that he was very much affected; and for my part, I resolved that I would do what I could to console him by admitting him yet more freely to my confidence, and by letting him understand that the suspicions which I had entertained about him no longer existed. He showed himself very grateful for my condescension; and I did not forget to confer upon him a yet more substantial reward as well, though I am persuaded that he did not value this as highly as my trust and affection.

The death of Hassan certainly put me at a disadvantage, for, notwithstanding his refusal, I had continued to hope that I might be able to persuade him to give proof of the part which Fazal Khan had taken in the plot. But 'twas hopeless to think of this now; none of the prisoners knew anything of the crafty hakim, who had the skill to hide every trace of his complicity. This was an excessive disappointment to me, for I had entertained some idea of accomplishing his overthrow by bringing his guilt to light; and I even had some thoughts of putting my credit with the Emperor to the test, by making an unsupported accusation against him—since I was quite satisfied of the truth of it—and requiring that Aurungzebe should accept my word in the matter. But when I ventured to make a cautious attempt, the Emperor refused to hear me, telling me very plainly that if I had no proofs, my accusations would be more likely to bring about my own undoing than that of my enemy.

It was certainly strange that the results of an

undertaking, which I had conducted with such extraordinary skill and success, should be so little satisfactory to myself ; yet so it was. In the first place, by the death of Hassan, I had lost a bold and faithful servant. Secondly, I had failed entirely to overthrow, or even shake, my arch-enemy Fazal Khan. And, in the third place, the manner which Aurungzebe himself used to me after my return to Agra caused me a great deal of uneasiness. I had supposed that my delicacy and skill in the matter would have engaged my master's affections so strongly, that my position would henceforth be unassailable ; but in this expectation I had forgotten to take into account the subtle and suspicious nature of the Great Mogul. It is true that he gave me the highest praise for my conduct of the affair, and professed a great deal of gratitude ; indeed, he even granted me a large sum of money in addition to the payment he had promised. Moreover, he advanced me to the highest position among the Omrahs, and for some time afterwards he continued to bestow upon me every outward mark of favour. Nevertheless, I believed—and I had afterwards reason to suppose that I was right—that some change had taken place in his feeling towards me. I could not understand this at the time ; but in view of what afterwards took place, I concluded that he felt some unreasonable resentment against me for having been a witness of the humiliation of his son. He had taken care to get rid of every person who was engaged in the matter save myself ; all the Guards and officers had been sent, on different pretexts, to distant garrisons, and I was the only person left at Court who knew the truth of the matter. Aurung-

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zebe had for so long been accustomed to regard all his officers with suspicion, and to conceal, even from his most intimate counsellors, the real motives of his policy, that he could not endure the notion that in this matter I shared his secret knowledge. Continual indulgence of suspicion had certainly warped his nature; and by various trifling signs, such as the strange expression which I sometimes surprised in his eyes, when he supposed I did not know he was looking at me, or a sudden causeless asperity in his manners towards me, I became convinced that he was harbouring some injurious thoughts about me. I did everything that ingenuity could suggest to endear myself to him, and to remove the poisonous feelings from his mind; but in spite of my efforts, I was never again able to feel as confident as I had formerly done of his affection for me.

CHAPTER VIII.

I VISIT A MOGUL LADY. I AM DISCOVERED IN THE HAREM, AND
SUBJECTED TO THE TORTURE OF THE BASTINADO.

THERE is nothing that leads more surely to ruin than a too persistent success. My enemies knew this, and made use of their knowledge in procuring my downfall. Hitherto I had laughed at all their schemes, and escaped from their toils as easily as that strong man of the Israelites from the green withes of his foes. Each treacherous attempt against me had but marked another step in my progress towards the summit of prosperity, and I had now attained a position of such power and influence that it might have been supposed that I was unassailable. So I believed, and in consequence I grew careless; I no longer held myself constantly on the alert to repel a sudden act of violence, or to foil a deed of treachery. And as time went on, and no further attempts were made against me, I really imagined that my foes, seeing the eminence to which I had attained, had abandoned as hopeless the attacks which they had made when my position was less assured. If I had only known it, I was now, by reason of that very confidence, in greater danger than ever before.

I have already spoken of the progresses which I was in the habit of making through the city. In proportion as my wealth and influence increased, I added to the magnificence of my retinue, and before long the occasions of my appearing in public came to be observed as general holidays. When I

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issued forth from the fort, clothed in magnificence, seated upon one of the Imperial elephants, and surrounded by numerous officers and attendants, of whom the least was more splendidly habited than the richest of the Omrahs, every person in the neighbourhood abandoned his work. I progressed through lines of onlookers, who raised cries of adulation as I passed. In front of me rode my faithful Mirza Khan, mounted upon a white Arabian horse, splendidly apparelled. On either side of his saddle were great bags of cloth of gold, filled with coins, and as he advanced he scattered handfuls of money right and left among the populace, who grew frantic in their struggles to obtain a share of this largesse. Sometimes, I believe, these struggles led to serious combats, and persons were wounded and even killed. It was a disagreeable reflection to me, that even my bounty could not be bestowed without harm resulting to some; but I did not allow myself to be disturbed by this, nor hold myself responsible for the evils arising from the greed and foolish passions of the commonalty.

The sums which were disbursed in this way, and in relieving the necessities of the poor, who came in multitudes to my receptions, were very great; and yet Providence, which rewards the just and merciful, did not allow me to suffer by my benevolence. Indeed, the more I expended in charity, and in maintaining the magnificence of my position, the larger grew my receipts. The greater my influence at Court became, the more indispensable did it appear that all who had petitions to make, all who desired the Imperial favour or assistance, should secure my patronage. Those who needed my help,

seeing the extraordinary wealth which I displayed, were obliged to increase the value of their presents, in order to make them worthy of my acceptance; and I found that, despite my utmost generosity, I never lavished a pagoda but three returned to my coffers. Even the most powerful Omrahs, who at first had scorned me as an adventurer, were now fain to procure my favour; and in dealing with these persons, who had fattened on the moneys they had wrung from the poor and needy, I showed no mercy. I constantly refused even the richest gifts, and I never did so but the present was immediately doubled in value. Indeed, it came to be commonly said, that while the poor might freely obtain all they needed from the Cárar Sahib, his favour was more expensive to an Omrah than the upkeep of an army. And yet, so particular was the affection which Aurungzebe continued to display for me, that even the most powerful of them all did not venture to dispense with my good-will.

If any man had predicted that when I was at the supreme height of my prosperity, I should in an instant fall to the lowest depths of misery, I should have laughed him to scorn. Indeed, to this day, when I look back upon the events which I am about to describe, the suddenness of my downfall seems incredible; and upon the very day which was to be the last of my supremacy, it would have appeared to me that sudden ruin could no more befall me than the Emperor himself. Thus do we deceive ourselves!

It was my usual practice to undertake those progresses of which I have spoken in the afternoon, when the Public Audiences were over, and I was no

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longer required to attend upon the Emperor; and on my return to my quarters in the evening I usually held a private court of my own, when petitioners came before me, and I arranged my businesses for the following day. All sorts of persons frequented these receptions; and upon that fatal day, which, though I knew it not, was to be the last of my prosperity, it caused me no surprise to observe, among the throng of people waiting for my return, an old woman. I thought I could guess what her business was likely to be, for I had often received messages of a certain kind in this way; and my interest being aroused by the expectations which her presence there occasioned me, I kept my eye upon her while seeming to be absorbed in hearing petitions.

It soon struck me that she made no effort to press to the front and gain speech with me; but rather hung back, and tried to remain unobserved. Now in the East, even more than in other countries, a certain degree of acuteness is needed in dealing with such affairs as I supposed this to be; an acuteness in which, I venture to assert, I have never been found lacking. In this case, I thought I perceived what she wished me to do; and presently, after arranging as much business as I should have time to transact on the morrow, I declared that the Audience was at an end, and ordered my officers to clear the place. At the same time, I called to me a fellow whom I could trust, and directed him to detain the old woman, and bring her privately to me in another room.

When she was brought into my presence, I looked at her closely, and although she was veiled as care-

fully as any young beauty, I observed that she was old and decrepit. The material of her dress was of good quality, and this seemed to offer confirmation of what I had guessed, that she was the servant of some lady of rank. She prostrated herself before me with the utmost humility; and seeing that she remained in this posture, I addressed her in a jesting manner: "Rise, O moon," I said, "and prefer your request without fear, for to one of such beauty nothing can be refused."

She did as I directed, and the voice which issued from behind her veil assured me that I had not been mistaken in the matter of her age.

"Lord," she replied, after making the usual compliments, "I am the bearer of a request to you; but verily, I fear to utter it."

"Speak, lady," I said, "without fear. If your request is reasonable it is already granted."

"My lord, it is but a little thing. The lady whose servant I am, hath desired me to entreat that when you pass again through the Chandni Bazaar, and come opposite to the house of Biju Lall, the jeweller, you will conceal your face, so that it may not be seen."

I experienced the greatest surprise at this odd request; and not being able to guess what it meant, my curiosity was aroused by such an unusual demand. I therefore desired her to proceed, which she did with every mark of humility, though I suspected that she was secretly chuckling behind her veil.

"Lord, my lady hath seen your beauty, and hath become enamoured of you. She is stricken with love, because of the luxuriance of your beard, in

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which are as many hairs as there are grains of sand in the desert; the ruddiness of your lips has afflicted her, and she is grieved by the blackness of your eyes, which resemble the night. Therefore she would entreat you to hide yourself from her, lest her love should become so excessive as to cause her death."

I was not much surprised at this declaration; indeed, I had anticipated something of the kind; and though the language of the old woman may perhaps have been somewhat exaggerated, it was not more so than is usual among the Easterns. Modesty, which every man of true courage should cultivate, forbids me to speak too freely in this matter, but I may remind the reader that it was no new thing for me to discover that a gentle heart was consumed by a passion for me which I had not desired to arouse. I have never been disposed to claim the least credit for such conquests, for every gentleman knows how little is needed to inflame the hearts of the ladies. A gay and gallant bearing, a handsome face, and a reputation for some extraordinary degree of courage: these are the things which commend us to the affections of the fair creatures; and if I possessed these qualities to an unusual extent, I am not inclined to boast on that account, for I attribute them to the favourable disposition of Providence, rather than to my own merits.

I have often reminded myself, as I rode through the city richly dressed and splendidly mounted, and greeted by the admiring and affectionate plaudits of the multitude, that behind the closed lattices of the houses many a soft eye must have been gazing

upon me ; many a gentle bosom must have heaved a sigh, many a tender heart must have throbbed more rapidly, as the Frankish noble rode past in his glory. Those amorous wounds which I unintentionally inflicted sometimes weighed upon my conscience ; and I considered it a duty in those cases, like the present, where the fair one contrived to acquaint me with her passion, to do what I could to still the violent beating of a tender heart whose repose I had unwittingly disturbed. Indeed, it was this generous desire to assuage the passions I had aroused, rather than an undue readiness to engage in intrigues, which led me into so many of those amorous passages, some of which I have described. In this matter, as in others, I have been maligned. Those to whom Nature has been less bountiful than she has to me, and who, by reason of their insignificant appearance, are not formed to attract—save in derision—the notice of females, are ever ready to decry this generosity in me which they themselves have no occasion to exercise. But herein the voice of envy is manifest, for indeed nothing can be more exasperating than to contemplate others committing those pleasant sins from which we ourselves are debarred by our contemptible endowments.

It will be understood, therefore, that I was very ready to pursue this matter further, and put to the old woman the questions which, I conceived, she desired me to ask. I therefore addressed her with the same manner of ironical flattery as before, which I perceived was not disagreeable to her.

“ O moon of my delight,” I said pleasantly, “ who is this lady whom the Arrow of Love has wounded ? ”

“ Allah preserve you, lord ! ” she replied, “ I must not tell you.”

“Does she desire to be cured of her affliction?”

The old woman uttered some senile cacklings, which I took to indicate mirth. “Nay, I know not,” she chuckled. “The wounds of love are sweet. Yet she suffers grievously because of you.”

“O lady,” I exclaimed, “do you not know that I am a physician, and that I cured the Emperor of a tertian when he was on the point of release?”

“Ay, lord, the whole city knows that.”

“Then if you would do your lady a service, obtain for me an interview with her, that I may endeavour to assuage her sufferings.”

At this she feigned horror. “Lord,” she cried, “what you ask is impossible. To introduce you to the harem would be a crime, and might lead to the death of us all. Truly, my Lady Amina, who is beautiful as the houris of Paradise, upon whose cheek is a mole resembling a globule of ambergris, who hath——” I understood very well that she wished to urge me on, and I thought I knew what was needed to overcome her feigned scruples. While she was speaking, I put my hand beneath my robe, and drew out a bag of gold. I handed this to her, and interrupted her protestations.

“Will not this key unlock the door of the harem?” I asked.

She grasped the bag, and hid it away in her clothing. “Truly,” she said, with pretended unwillingness, “’tis fruitless to oppose the desires of the beloved of Allah! Moreover, it is a good action to aid those who suffer, and I am persuaded that you will be able to assuage the violence of my lady’s affliction. Listen, hakim-ji,” she continued, coming close to me; “do you know the shop of Biju Lall?”

I told her that I did, and she went on. "Beside his shop there is an alley, leading to an open courtyard. If you would try your skill as a physician, do you go alone to this court at midnight. The south wall will be in the shadow cast by the moon. Stand within that shadow and wait; perchance I shall come to you, if Allah permits. But if none shall have come to you when the shadow at the foot of the wall grows too small to conceal you, return secretly and swiftly."

I nodded, although I was not yet sure that I should engage further in the adventure. The old woman now discovered a great deal of eagerness to be gone, saying that she had been too long absent. I therefore dismissed her, and she departed, after renewing her instructions and repeating, with the greatest earnestness, that I must go alone, and in disguise.

When she had left me, I fell to considering whether I should go. I shall not deny that the prospect of this adventure pleased me; and although the act of penetrating into a Mogul harem was undoubtedly dangerous, yet this fact encouraged rather than dissuaded me, for to a man of spirit there is no sauce so provoking as danger. Moreover, I had a great curiosity to see the inside of a harem, and to judge of the beauty of its inmates, of which I had heard so much. These reflections had already almost decided me; and when I remembered that the lady had certainly sent her servant in the expectation that I should arrange an interview, and that I had never yet committed the discourtesy of refusing the invitation of a lady, I needed nothing further to persuade me. I determined at once that I would

do as the old woman had desired me; and with a light heart I made my preparations for stepping blindly into this trap, from which I was only to escape at the cost of incredible sufferings.

Not to be too particular, I shall state briefly that at the appointed time I repaired to the courtyard, having carefully observed the old woman's directions, and concealed myself in the shadow at the foot of the south wall. It may seem strange in a man of such courage as I have shown that I possess, yet I must nevertheless admit that it is true, that as I stood there waiting in the silence, I suffered a good deal of uneasiness from fears as to what might be the end of this adventure. The neighbourhood was all silent, and the tall white houses, whose walls were pierced only by a few small windows high up above the ground, had a secret air which disquieted me. I knew that there were many people within a few feet of me, within those silent walls; yet never a sound of life reached my ears. The privacy of an Eastern house is such that the most dreadful deeds may be done in the midst of a crowded city, and no passer-by shall hear the faintest echo of a cry. I knew well enough that when I should have entered the presence of the Lady Amina, I could look for no help from outside, however great my need. True, I had taken the precaution of telling Mirza Khan where I was going, and doubtless he guessed my errand. But, if I should not return, it was little likely that he would be able to penetrate into the Mogul's harem, or even discover what my fate had been.

In fact the silence, and the sinister aspect of those mysterious houses, so greatly affected my spirits that

I began to regret that I had come. In order to reassure myself, and regain my courage, I therefore endeavoured to fix my mind upon other subjects, and I found a great deal of relief in contemplating some of those daring actions which have made my name famous. I reminded myself that in all those dangers which I had passed through my safety had depended, not upon outside aid, but upon my own courage and resource, and these weapons I still possessed. It was not long before I felt completely reassured, and I was able to laugh at my fears. "Is it likely," I said to myself, "that Providence has brought you through all those perils, to leave you to perish at last at the hands of an ignorant Mogul? No; such doubts are impious. Rely, as you have ever done, upon your own merits, and upon the assistance of heaven, which never abandons the deserving, and you will have no reason to regret your temerity."

I was engaged in these profitable reflections, when a sudden touch upon my arm gave me a most disagreeable start, and, indeed, very nearly made me cry out aloud. I had neither heard a sound, nor seen any movement, and for an instant the thought struck me that some enemy had seen me waiting in the shadow and had crept up to me, intending mischief against me. But even as I laid my hand upon my sword, my eyes pierced the shadow, and distinguished the bent and shrouded form of the hag whom I had been expecting. Seeing that she had engaged my attention, she turned without a word, and moved noiselessly along the wall, looking back to see that I was following. I understood now how she had been able to approach without my perceiv-

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ing her, for she moved noiselessly, not even a faint tinkle of ankle-rings marking her passage; and her dark garments blended so well with the gloom that even now, knowing she was there, I had some difficulty in making out her form.

We came to a door, which, lying in the shadow, had been invisible to me, and passing through this, we entered a dark passage. We cannot judge of the beauty or value of a pearl by the amount of trouble we must take before we can open the shell which contains it; if 'twere so, sure, I should have anticipated seeing the most lovely houri that could be imagined, for before I could be brought into her presence I was led by the virago up and down narrow dark passages; I had to ascend rickety stairs; and, finally, to climb a knotted rope suspended from a window, and to haul the old woman up after me—a feat which I did not accomplish without handling that bundle of faded charms somewhat roughly. These exercises left me rather breathless, and when at length we halted before a door which stood at the head of a steep course of stairs, I would willingly have paused to regain my breath and arrange my disordered apparel. However, the crone did not allow me any time, for, after telling me to wait for her, she entered the apartment, and returned at once and desired me to follow her. I stepped through the doorway with a heart which beat rather rapidly; for what with amorous anticipations, curiosity, and some slight remnant of the nervousness which I had suffered when waiting below in the shadow, my mind was full of such an agitation as I had rarely experienced.

The apartment into which she led me was but

dimly lighted by some hanging lamps; but I was able to perceive the extraordinary richness of the silken curtains, and of the rugs and carpets which were scattered about. The air was delightfully cool, and perfumed with those rich and languorous odours in which the Easterns delight. I was hurried through this apartment into another and smaller one, which was furnished in a similar fashion; but here I had no eye for tapestries and carpets, for as I entered, two of the most intoxicating houris that can be imagined came gliding up to me. Although these ladies were only slaves, yet they were dressed with the greatest richness; their little bare feet glided over the floor without any sound save the tinkling of their golden ankle-rings, and every movement of their voluptuous forms seemed to disengage, from the folds of their silken raiment, clouds of the most delicious perfume. They were veiled, as the law of Islam directs, but their veils were of such transparent material as to enhance rather than to conceal the entrancing beauty of their melting black eyes.

Those lovely creatures bowed before me, and, without uttering a word, beckoned me to follow them. They led me through a curtained archway into a third chamber, much larger than the others, and, still without speaking, brought me before a heavily-veiled figure, reclining upon a heap of cushions. Here they bowed again, and retiring, modestly seated themselves upon a kind of divan which ran around three sides of the apartment, upon which I perceived a number of other veiled beauties, all of whom were watching me with the greatest interest through their flimsy veils. Their mistress, as I

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guessed the lady to be, partly rose from her reclining position, and waving a little hand towards some cushions near her, invited me to be seated.

It is impossible to convey a true idea of the extraordinary richness and luxury of this, the most sacred inner chamber of the harem. The walls and floor were of polished marble, and at the far end was a high narrow window, in shape rather like that of a church, filled in with lattice work of stone, very cunningly designed and of great beauty, through which the occupants of the harem could peep without being seen by persons outside. The ceiling rose into a dome, delightfully ornamented with carvings, and from it depended six silver lamps, suspended by slender chains of the same metal, in which scented oils were burning. In the centre of the marble floor was a basin, in which a little fountain played, while fishes of brilliant colour sparkled in the water. There were carpets and rugs of the most luxurious texture; little carved tables of a height convenient for a person reclining on a heap of cushions, as the Moguls are used to; vessels of gold and silver, whose uses I did not know; musical instruments, and many other rare and curious objects. In short, this delightful bower of love was a fit temple for those entrancing nymphs for whose service and worship it was intended.

I accepted the lady's invitation, and seated myself upon a pile of soft crimson cushions, in the manner I had learned at the Court. I must confess I was somewhat at a loss how to address this female. But she did not appear to feel any embarrassment, and she began to pay me some graceful compliments upon the brilliant reputation I had acquired, which,

she declared, had penetrated even into the harem. This put me at my ease, and I began to converse with a good deal of subtlety. Her women brought refreshments, of which I partook, and I then mustered sufficient courage to request her to unveil, and display to me that beauty which, I was persuaded, must be unequalled.

She pretended unwillingness, but after a little persuasion she was induced to lay aside her veil, and expose to my view a countenance which was certainly handsome, though a little impaired by the ravages of time. I did not allow her to perceive the disappointment which I felt—for I had heard so much praise of the Mogul ladies as had led me to form some extravagant expectations—but protested, with a great deal of earnestness, that her beauty was so great as to make me regret that I had exposed myself to its assaults. In short, without repeating a conversation which might prove wearisome, I shall merely say that I spared no efforts to make myself agreeable to her; and I succeeded so well that in a short time we were on the best of terms, and I flattered myself that I had made a powerful impression upon her heart.

I hoped that I should be left alone with her, for I found it somewhat embarrassing to carry on an amorous conversation in the presence of her women, who listened to every word I uttered, and did not hesitate even to discuss among themselves, with the greatest frankness, the compliments I paid her. I was about to suggest that she should require these nymphs to retire, but before I could do so she proposed that one of her women should perform some music before us. I assented, for I did not desire

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to alarm her by pressing her too far at our first meeting; and thereupon one of the damsels seated herself in front of us, and sang with a good deal of skill a love song of the most tender and pathetic nature, assisting her voice by thrumming upon an instrument which resembled a lyre.

A good deal of time was occupied in this way. Since this intrigue was destined to go no further, I shall give no very particular account of my conversation; it will be enough to say that I was by this time entirely at my ease, for I had forgotten those misgivings which had troubled me when I was waiting for the old woman, and the agreeable conversation of the Lady Amina and her sweet singing of her damsel had quite quieted my apprehensions. When the song was over, I determined to make a more vigorous assault than before upon the affections of the lady, and I was leaning towards her and whispering some soft words into her ear, when I was interrupted by a most dreadful and alarming occurrence. The old woman burst suddenly into the apartment, and exclaimed, with a voice and countenance expressive of the utmost terror, that her lord was about to visit his harem.

In an instant the utmost confusion arose; the women shrieked, and ran hither and thither aimlessly, evidently persuaded that ruin must overtake them and their mistress. As for the lady, she turned pale, but she did not permit her fears to lead her into such extravagances as her servants were committing. Indeed, in this dreadful emergency she displayed so much courage as impressed me very favourably, though I was afterwards led to take a different view of the matter.

In this extremity of danger my first thought was for the safety of the lady whose reputation, and life perhaps, I had endangered by my imprudence. For myself, I cared nothing; the least of the countless perils from which I have escaped unharmed was no less imminent than this, and it would have shown an impious distrust in the protection of Providence if I had doubted that I should be enabled to make my escape on this occasion. But, unhappily, bravery could avail nothing in such a case as this; for I could not take the lady with me, and the very fact that I had put myself beyond the reach of her outraged lord would perhaps increase the severity with which he was certain to punish her infidelity. In short, I recognised instantly that here was one of those cases in which I must curb the natural desire of a gentleman to rely upon his sword, and must instead entrust my fortunes, and those of my fair friend, to my wits; those wits which had never failed me, and by the use of which I had already raised myself to the highest pitch of glory.

Despite the imminence of the danger, despite also the fact that no more than a few moments could elapse before the arrival of the Mogul, I did not permit myself to be discomposed. I rose instantly from the pile of cushions on which I had been reclining, rapidly disarranged them with my foot so as to destroy the outline of my form, which was imprinted upon them, and turning to one of the waiting women, and speaking with such a remarkable appearance of courage and composure as quickly quieted her fears, I desired her instantly to show me a spot in which I might conceal myself.

The energy and authority of my tones had so

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much effect upon the woman, who but a moment before had been wailing and wringing her hands in the last extremity of terror, that she became instantly sobered, and starting to her feet, cast a rapid glance around the apartment. "Hither, lord," she exclaimed, and beckoned me to a corner where the lamps shed but little light. I followed, and she drew aside a hanging curtain, desiring me to enter the little recess which it concealed; advice which I lost no time in obeying, and, faith, 'twas not a moment too soon, for hardly had she stepped away from the spot, when the Mogul came in.

I was so situated that I was able to hear with perfect ease every word that passed, although I could see nothing. Judge then of my surprise when I recognised the familiar and detested tones of my arch enemy, Fazal Khan. My heart beat with such violence that it was like to have suffocated me; and I am not ashamed to admit that at this moment I undertood, perhaps for the first time in my career, the meaning of terror. For let none mistake the horror of my position. I was here in imminent risk of discovery by a man who, to the fanatical jealousy of the Moguls, who inflict death, or worse, upon a man thus discovered in the privacy of the harem, added other reasons for regarding me with detestation. My life, should my presence be detected, must inevitably be lost; for the Emperor was so fanatical a Mohammedan that he would certainly regard my offence as unpardonable, and, moreover, so fierce is the temper of the Omrahs in this matter, that he dare not, even if he would, interfere in favour of an infidel who should violate the harem. I understood that Fazal Khan might do as he liked

with me if he should become aware of my presence, and might inflict upon me any punishment he chose, without fear of being called to account by Aurungzebe.

So great was the perturbation of my spirit at the discovery that I had penetrated into the very lair of my most implacable enemy, that at first I remained unconscious of what was passing around me. But from this bewilderment I was aroused by hearing the hakim mention my name. I instantly conceived that I was discovered, and I was about to step forth, in order to avoid the indignity of being dragged from my hiding-place, but luckily I refrained, being willing to await some confirmation of my idea before taking so hazardous and desperate a step.

The next words of the hakim did indeed relieve my fears, but they were of such a nature as to arouse my utmost resentment. "Yes, indeed," he was saying in that smooth voice that I so much detested, "I have good reason to hate the Nazarene dog. But as you know, he is high in favour with Aurungzebe, and for the present all schemes directed to his overthrow must be in vain."

"How comes it, my lord, that the infidel has attained in so short a time to such a degree of favour?" answered the voice of the Lady Amina.

"Heart of my heart, all things are as God directs," replied the ruffian. "Doubtless it is the will of Allah that he should climb to the supremest height, that his downfall may be the more grievous. By the exercise of his arts, and by every kind of treachery and deceit, he has gained so strong an

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influence over the Emperor that he will not hear a word in his disfavour."

"It is indeed strange," murmured the lady. "What manner of man is this Frank? Is he well-favoured?"

That detestable hakim affected to laugh. "Well-favoured!" he cried. "Wallah! 'tis the oddest figure of a man that ever I saw. Know, firstly, that one of his shoulders is higher than the other by a hand's-breadth."

"Thou dog!" says I to myself. "If ever I get clear of this difficulty, I will inflict the like disfigurement upon thee."

"Then," continued the hakim, "he has a most ridiculous squint. Moreover, his knees, as well as his eyes, incline inward and rub together as he walks, like the hoofs of a money-lender's ass. He has no more than a dozen hairs upon his chin, as is usual among the Franks; and his whole body is so warped and twisted that it is said among the Omrahs that it were better for a woman to be mated with a gray ape of the hills than with this oddity."

My blood boiled at these insults; but I controlled my wrath, though with difficulty.

"In mind he is as much deformed as in body," continued my enemy, "for in the whole of the Court there is none so corrupt as he. He will accept a poor man's last coin, and will make no effort to further his petitions, unless there is some hope of wringing something more out of him. He would sell his father's bones, could a bidder be found for such carrion. And, as that man only is courageous who is also virtuous, the Frank is a

notorious coward. The Emperor hath constantly beaten him before the whole Court, without his daring to protest; nay, I myself, on one occasion, when he offended me, seized him by the beard, spat upon him, and——”

“Infamous dog!” I roared, no longer capable of suppressing my anger, and dashing aside the curtain which concealed me, “thou liest! Accursed villain, that thou art, I will make thee eat thy words.” Seizing him by the beard, I threw him upon the ground, and started belabouring him so heartily that I was like to have killed him; but a number of lusty slaves rushed in, summoned by his outcries, and by the screaming of the women, and seizing me, forcibly obliged me to quit my hold upon him. Unarmed as I was, my struggles were of no avail against their numbers; and in a short time, despite my vigorous resistance, I was lying upon the ground, so securely bound in linen cloths as to be unable to move hand or foot. My cowardly enemy, seeing me in this helpless situation, allowed his hatred free play, and gratified his ill-will towards me by spitting upon me, striking me with his foot in the most tender portions of the body, pulling hairs from my beard, and otherwise inflicting upon me every outrage that malice could suggest.

Although the rough treatment I received left me well-nigh insensible, I had yet sufficient penetration to perceive that he did not allow his spite to overmaster his cunning. For when he had sufficiently amused himself at my expense, he stepped back, and thus addressed me.

“O dog! Son of a dog! Offspring of dishonourable parents! Think not that I do not know you!

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You are the servant of that detestable villain the Frank; doubtless he has sent you here to spy upon me. Verily, I would slay you, but that I desire to return you to your master as an earnest of what is in store for him."

In the heat of the struggle, I had indeed forgotten that I was disguised. Now the hakim's words put me in mind of the fact, and although I very well understood that he had recognised me, and that he had some evil designs in pretending to be deceived, yet I determined to oblige him by keeping up the deception. For had I appeared in his harem in my own character, he would have had no choice but to slay me upon the spot, and this he did not desire to do for two reasons. First, my position at the Court was so assured, that although the Emperor would not openly avenge my death, since I had been taken in the fact, yet he would assuredly make the hakim suffer for the slight offered to the Imperial person by the destruction of one whom he so markedly favoured. Hence mine enemy desired to obtain the Imperial licence for his revenge before proceeding to gratify his ill-will : a licence which, as he knew well, the Emperor dare not refuse. And secondly, he promised himself the opportunity of enjoying a more protracted vengeance, when he should have me in his hands alive.

I instantly penetrated these designs, notwithstanding the agitation which his cruelty had caused me; but I considered that although by keeping up the deception I might seem to be furthering his plans, yet the alternative was instant death; and while I stood in so great a danger it was no small matter to preserve my life. If I could do that, I

might very well leave consideration of the future until such time as I should have made good my escape from the more imminent peril. On these grounds, I determined to endure, with what fortitude I might, the utmost stings of his malice.

I was given but little time for consideration. Under the direction of the hakim a stout pole was brought, and my feet were passed through two rings in the centre of this, and secured in such a manner that I could by no means withdraw them. Two slaves held the pole, one at either end, the soles of my feet being thus turned upward, and a third brought forward a bundle of rods, from which he selected one, and handed it to one of his fellows. He chose another for himself, and the two villains then proceeded to lay on to my naked feet with the most incredible barbarity, encouraging each other by calling upon the name of God, and Mohammed His Prophet. Each stroke was accompanied by some such exclamation as "Allaho Akbar!" or "La illah ilaha!" very much in the manner of seamen, who thus lighten the burden of their labour, as they haul upon the ropes, by raising some kind of a chantey.

The torment which I experienced by reason of this barbarous usage was so exquisite that I was like to have swooned. So vigorous was the application that after some score of blows one of the rods splintered, and shortly after the other. I thought this would bring my torture to an end. 'Twas not so, however, for the rascals chose each a fresh rod, and after pausing a moment to ease their breathing, which had been somewhat quickened by the violence of their exertions, they renewed the

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application with increased vigour. They paid no heed to my grievous lamentations—for I am not ashamed to confess that after the fiftieth stroke I could no longer refrain from uttering some cries—on the contrary, they appeared to obtain fresh strength from the sounds I uttered. At length, after I had endured I know not how many stripes, my senses forsook me; the world became black, and oblivion came to relieve me of my monstrous sufferings.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HAKIM'S STRATAGEM FOR MY RUIN. MY TRIAL AND
CONDEMNATION.

I KNEW nothing more until I awoke in the most dreadful agonies, to find myself lying upon my own bed, with my fellow Nathoo bending over me. The faithful creature discovered the most poignant grief at my condition; the tears rolled down his cheeks, and he was so shaken by his sobs that for a while he was unable to attend to me. I now endured torments which were, if anything, more terrible than had been those which the actual stripes had occasioned me; my feet were swollen out of all likeness to human members, and were so inflamed that I could not suffer even the lightest touch. To heighten my distress, I was in a violent fever, my lips were parched and burning, and I experienced an insatiable craving for water. In this dreadful situation my faithful Nathoo displayed all the tenderness of a woman; he laved my feet with fair water, which somewhat alleviated the inflammation, and he performed every service which devotion could suggest, to moderate my sufferings. I found that he had taken the necessary measures to withhold all knowledge of my misfortune from every person, even of my own household; and for this I highly commended him, for I was sensible that my credit must have suffered had it been known that I had been subjected to the punishment of the bastinado. He told me that he had given out that I was indisposed, and had refused, even to Mirza Khan,

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permission to approach me ; and my mind being set at ease in this respect, I was in a better situation to consider the alleviation of my bodily ills. I felt certain indeed that I should before long have further dangers to face, but with that philosophical temper which I have already described, I determined to put all such matters out of my mind until the necessity for considering them should arise ; for I hold him to be a fool who runs to meet his troubles.

But, alas ! I was given too short a respite ; my implacable foe knew better than to give me time to recover. He laid his plans for my downfall with the most diabolical ingenuity, and he carried them out undeterred by any considerations of mercy.

It was just after sunrise when I recovered from my swoon, and for a few hours I was left in peace. But a great man is like the sun in this, that he cannot withdraw behind clouds, whether of sickness or ill-fortune, but all the world is immediately aware of it. The report that I was indisposed was rapidly noised abroad, and reached the Emperor's ears before the day was far advanced. Such was the strength of his affection for me that he professed the liveliest concern, and immediately despatched an officer to wait upon me and ascertain how I did. This person, of course, was not admitted to see me, but on being informed of his arrival I desired Nathoo to acquaint him with my gratitude for the Emperor's condescension, and to report that my indisposition was but temporary.

I never had any full account of what next occurred, but from my conversation with Mirza Khan I gained a rough knowledge of the course of events. It would seem that directly after the officer

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had returned to the Emperor, the hakim Fazal Khan entered the Presence. He feigned to be in a state of agitation approaching frenzy; indeed, the disorder of his mind was, or appeared to be, so excessive, that for a considerable time he could not be brought to give any account of the cause, but at length he burst into a copious flood of weeping, and feigning to be somewhat relieved thereby—for I am certain that all this agitation was simulated—he informed the Emperor that during the previous night the sanctity of his harem had been invaded. He did not make this statement without many outbursts of indignation, and took care to raise the curiosity of the Emperor and the Omrahs to the highest pitch before making his disclosure.

It has been already explained that the action of which he made complaint is considered by the Mussalmans to be a much more serious matter than a mere personal injury; it is, in fact, an offence against the laws of Islam, and as such it is obnoxious to the most merciless punishment. On this account, Aurungzebe exhibited the utmost horror and concern on hearing his physician's relation; and being animated by his religious zeal and by the indignation which the Omrahs thought it proper to express, he uttered the most vehement threats of retribution before he had any idea as to who the culprit might be. Having relieved his feelings in this way, he then turned to Fazal Khan and inquired whether he had secured and punished the violator.

No doubt the hakim was very well pleased with what had taken place; but he did not, of course, permit his satisfaction to be seen. "Your Majesty,"

he replied, "I did indeed seize the villain; and in the violence of my wrath I caused him to be bastinadoed until he swooned. Your Majesty is aware that by the law of the Prophet—whose name be exalted—it was my right to put him to death; and I am persuaded that had I done so, your Majesty, whose zeal for the Faith is so well known, would have supported me. Nevertheless, when the fellow had been well trounced, I determined to hold my hand; and, indeed, I permitted him to escape for the moment, and in doing this I was influenced by a motive of which I believe your Majesty will approve."

"You have done wrong," said Aurungzebe; "for, indeed, I cannot imagine what circumstance that can be which can be considered a mitigation of such a monstrous crime. However, I will consent to hear your reason."

"Conqueror of the World," replied the crafty hakim, "Allah exalt thy seat! Know that I have reason to believe that the criminal was a servant of the Cánar Sahib, and on this account I considered that it would show a more fitting sense of the respect due to one so beloved of your Majesty that I should release his servant, and inform him of the case, so that he might himself inflict whatever punishment he may think proper."

The Emperor considered a while, and then answered, "Know then, that you have done wrong. True, your desire to show honour to the Cánar Sahib, than whom, I am persuaded, I have no more faithful servant, was praiseworthy. But the Frank is an infidel, and it is not fitting that the administration of the sacred law of Islam should be left in his

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hands. I will have this man brought into my presence forthwith, and after hearing his defence I will myself pronounce judgment."

"Your Majesty," replied the hakim, "the fellow was disguised, and I fear that I shall not be able to recognise him. But it will be easy to discover him. If you will summon hither the whole of the Cánar Sahib's household, we shall immediately see which one has recently suffered the punishment of the bastinado, for he will be unable to walk, save with pain and limping. If there should be one among the servants of the Frank in such a condition, he will be the criminal."

The Emperor approved this advice, and so it happened that immediately after the departure of the Imperial messenger a second courier was announced, and Nathoo informed me that he was come with the order that all my people should repair to the Council Chamber without delay. I could not be in doubt as to what was afoot; nevertheless, the command must be obeyed, and accordingly I despatched my fellows. I awaited the result with no little uneasiness, nor was I kept long in suspense; for after examining all my rascals and finding that none showed signs of having been beat, he sent a message commanding that I myself should attend the Audience, and that if I should be unable to proceed on foot on account of my indisposition, I was to be carried before him lying on my bed.

This much of what took place at the Palace, I learned from Mirza Khan afterwards; but, as I shall presently relate, my conversations with him were unhappily cut short by a circumstance which made it impossible that they should ever be renewed;

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and thus the story remained incomplete. But from what took place when I went before the Emperor, I have reason to believe that before ever I came into his presence he understood the whole matter; though whether he was directly informed of it by the hakim, or whether his natural penetration enabled him to guess the truth, I do not know.

When I received this command I immediately became filled with the most dreadful apprehensions, and I could not rid my mind of the notion that at last, at the very height of my glory and success, the toils of my enemies were being drawn about me so tightly that I should be unable to escape. I had that sense which will at times overwhelm even the most courageous soul, that the swollen tides of misfortune, long dammed up, had at last risen to such a height as to be irresistible. But though I was forced to recognise the danger in which I stood, and despaired of making head against it, let none suppose that I yielded to unmanly terrors. Not so; I resolved to meet whatever catastrophe Providence might decree with the same fortitude and equanimity which I have ever opposed to the most outrageous onslaughts of ill-fortune. I did not believe that it would be possible to escape; and although I held myself ready to seize any opportunity that might present itself, I endeavoured to prepare myself for misfortune. I commended my soul to God, and resolved that I would show these fanatical miscreants that a Christian gentleman knows how to die.

The Emperor's command could not be resisted, and notwithstanding my bodily sufferings, I allowed myself to be taken up on my bed and carried before

Aurungzebe. As I passed through the entrance to the great Hall of Audience, which had been the scene of so many of my most extraordinary triumphs, my heart sank, and a dreadful premonition warned me that those walls were now to be the witnesses of my downfall. I found nothing to reassure me in the manner of my reception; dead silence greeted me as I was carried in. The vast chamber was packed with Omrahs and lesser personages; it seemed as though word had gone forth that some stupendous event was about to take place, and that all who could claim admittance had hastened to the spot, like vultures collecting round a corpse. But I had no eyes for anyone save my Imperial Master; my fate, as I very well knew, lay in his hands, and the moment had come when I must prove the strength of his affection for me. My heart sank still further when I observed that he did not raise his eyes as I entered, but sat looking down, a troubled frown on his subtle face. The hakim Fazal Khan stood before him; he had the air of one who has just completed a passionate oration.

As for the Omrahs, none cared to meet my eye. Those who could not avoid doing so, greeted me respectfully and yet uneasily. I could see very well that they hung in the wind, uncertain how to conduct themselves towards me; they had no desire to treat a disgraced favourite with cordiality, but so deep was the impression that my address had made upon them, that they could not feel secure, and were in doubt as to whether I should not, even at the last moment, regain my position by some extraordinary piece of audacity, and turn the tables on

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my accusers. In this difficulty, most of them avoided my eye as I cast a glance around the circle. Faith, I understood their uneasiness so well that even at that moment I could not restrain a contemptuous smile. For my part, I flatter myself that my bearing was as jaunty and courageous as at the most auspicious moment of my career. And when the Emperor raised his inscrutable eyes, and regarded me with that judicial look which I had often known to overawe and terrify a criminal to the point of a voluntary confession of his crime, I endured his scrutiny with composure, and discovered no sign of uneasiness. I determined that if my Master sought to find the marks of guilt in my countenance, he should seek in vain. I was resolved to neglect no chances of escape, and I understood very well the value of creating a good impression in the mind of my judge.

Nevertheless, I strove to read the Emperor's countenance, and to discover in it, if I could, some signs which would show that he was favourably disposed towards me. But, as always, his expression was perfectly inscrutable; and save that his regard was severe, he discovered no outward sign of his feelings, whether of anger, distrust, or the affection which I hoped he still felt for me. And I cannot deny that as I looked at his cold, harsh features, my mind became full of misgivings. Hitherto, I had always believed that he entertained for me some real tenderness; yet I could not but remember how often he had suddenly turned against some Omrah whom he had favoured, but who had the misfortune to offend him. I recalled his treatment of his sons, for whom he professed the warmest attachment. Yet

he had not hesitated to visit them with the most cruel and relentless punishment when they had aroused his anger. Besides, it was my misfortune that my offence was a violation of those religious prejudices to which he clung with such fanatical zeal. I had little hope that the truth could be concealed from him; I had rather relied upon his affection, which I had hoped might induce him to prevent my guilt from being publicly discovered, as he might very easily have done. But as I thought on these matters, the most dreadful fears began to possess me. I doubted whether, after all, the affection he had pretended to feel had been real. Perhaps, in showing me so much favour, he had only been pursuing some subtle policy of his own; and now, his ends being served, he might be only too glad to find an opportunity of destroying one whose wealth had reached such a pitch as almost to rival his own. These were the doubts and fears which tormented me as I waited for him to speak; however, I did not, as I have said, allow anything of this to appear in my countenance.

After a long pause Aurungzebe broke the silence. "I regret that you are ill, Cánar Sahib," he said, "and you may believe that I should not have summoned you thus to my presence, but that the matter will not permit of delay. The truth is, that the harem of my principal physician has been invaded by some villainous fellow, who has thus set at defiance the most sacred laws of the Faith. The hakim declares that the dog was one of your servants, and as it is necessary to discover the truth, I desired you to send your whole household before me. The hakim inflicted the bastinado upon the

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villain, and thus I hoped to discover him by the condition of his feet. However, there is none among your retainers who shows any signs of having recently been beaten. Now therefore cast your eye over them, and inform me whether any one of them is missing."

There was nothing in his speech to inform me that he guessed at the truth, and I began to have some slight hope that the danger might pass. I looked at my officers and couriers, who stood apart in a group, and by their unconcerned looks I perceived that they understood nothing of the danger in which I stood, and saw in the Emperor's demand no hidden meaning. Mirza Khan alone met my eye with a look of intelligence; he had been at the Court before the others were summoned, and doubtless he knew very well everything that had passed between the hakim and Aurungzebe. Even at this moment, when my mind was so full of my danger, I could not forbear to wonder whether he would stand fast on my side, or whether, considering my case hopeless, and thinking that he could offer me no useful assistance, he would endeavour to save himself by declaring against me. I do not even know whether I wished him to prove staunch or not; for though it would certainly grieve me to find him so knavish and cowardly as to desert me, yet I knew that he could do no good, and I had such an affection for him that the prospect of his being dragged down by me in my fall was intolerable to me.

"Ornament of the Throne," I replied, "not one of my people is missing; they are all here. Therefore the criminal cannot be one of them; and I

rejoice at this, although I entreat your Majesty to believe that if any servant of mine should be guilty of a crime, I should certainly hand him over to justice, without hesitation."

Aurungzebe made no reply to this protestation, but turned to Fazal Khan and inquired if he were satisfied.

"Ay, your Majesty," replied that crafty scoundrel, "it is certain that the violator cannot be a servant of the Cánar Sahib. I must search elsewhere, and perchance it will not be long before I discover him. However, I do not desire to do anything without your Majesty's approval, and it may be that I shall not be able to control my wrath when I shall have found the villain. I shall therefore entreat you to grant me beforehand your permission to take him into my own hands, and to inflict upon him myself whatever punishment I desire for his detestable crime."

Aurungzebe considered for a moment, and then turned to me with a look so full of significance that I instantly perceived that he knew everything already. "Cánar Sahib," he said, permitting a faint smile to twist his lips, "I have constantly found your advice useful. What do you say; shall I grant the hakim's request, or shall I reserve to myself the infliction of the punishment that is due?"

Alas! I understood. I was required to pronounce my own condemnation. This, however, I would not do. "Your Majesty," I replied in a tone of as much indifference as I could command, "I am certainly of opinion that although, doubtless, the hakim would obtain more satisfaction if his request

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should be granted, yet in view of the gravity of the crime, it would be more fitting that punishment should be inflicted, and the dignity of the law upheld, by the Emperor himself."

This I said with a faint hope that perhaps after all Aurungzebe had no other intention than to punish me by arousing my fears, and that at the last moment he would interpose on my behalf, and prevent my exposure. But he heard me with a frown, being displeased, I suppose, that I had not fallen into the trap that he had laid for me. "That is not the custom among the Faithful," he said coldly. "Permission is granted you, Fazal Khan; you may do as you please with the villain, with but one restriction: you shall not forgive him, nor suffer him to escape too lightly."

The hakim's eyes glittered with malice. "Your Majesty," he replied, "I am fully sensible of your condescension, and I assure you that I shall not err on the side of clemency. I shall now devote my whole energies to the apprehension of the criminal; but first, I desire to make amends to the Cánar Sahib for my injurious suspicions, and I conceive that I can do this in no better wise than by making use of my skill to cure him of whatever malady afflicts him. I beseech your Majesty to permit me to make my peace with him in this fashion."

Now indeed I comprehended his treacherous scheme. "Your Majesty," says I, before the Emperor could answer, "no amends are needed from the hakim, and I bear him no ill-will for his suspicions. As for his offer to treat my disease, it will not be necessary for him to do so, for I have taken some drugs which are sufficient to cure me;

indeed, I already feel some benefit from them. It would not be wise for the hakim to interfere with their beneficial effect by using some other treatment."

"Nay, your Majesty," said the villain, "it is well known that physicians, however skilful they may be in the treatment of the disorders of others, are constantly mistaken in regard to their own maladies. I fear that the Cárar Sahib is more seriously ill than he thinks, and my affection for him emboldens me to urge your Majesty to permit me to examine him."

I began to protest again, but Aurungzebe would not hear me. "What you say is very true," he said, interrupting me, "without doubt he is in greater danger than he supposes. You are at liberty to do what you can for him."

At that my enemy stepped forward, and coming over to where I lay, made pretence of examining me. He thrust his vile countenance close to mine, staring insolently at me, and regarding me with an expression of the most dreadful malice. But I returned his gaze with so much fortitude, and with an expression of such implacable defiance as quite discomfited him, and in spite of the fact that he was on the very brink of his triumph he could not endure my glance.

After making believe to satisfy himself, he stood erect and addressed the Emperor. "Your Majesty," he said in his villainous smooth voice, "I believe the Cárar Sahib may be very easily cured, and my observation of his condition assures me that no remedy can be more suitable for him than that which he formerly applied with such notable success

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to one of your Ministers. I shall therefore, with your permission, proceed to apply the treatment without delay.

This, then, was the shocking treachery upon which he relied to expose me. Sure, I had always known him to be a malicious scoundrel, but I had not supposed that even his malice could dictate such barbarous conduct. I knew not what to do or say. To protest would have been to expose myself; besides, I had already protested, and the Emperor had not heeded my words. But even now I could not believe that he would thus basely abandon one who had rendered him such services as I had performed. I still clung desperately to the hope that my Master did but wish to torment me with suspense, and that now, when a word from him would save me, or condemn me to destruction, that word would be given in my favour.

I said nothing therefore, being determined that if I could not save my life, I would yet preserve my dignity, and feeling that cowardly entreaties for mercy would not only be unworthy of me, but would fail to serve me, I turned and fixed my eyes resolutely upon the Emperor, permitting him to read in my countenance an appeal for the support which my services had certainly merited.

But, alas! in his face I could perceive no token of generosity or mercy. His look expressed nothing but the cold anger which my offence had aroused in him, and perhaps a cruel curiosity as to how I should meet my fate. For several minutes we gazed at each other, amid the dead silence of the on-lookers; and even at that dreadful moment, when my fate hung upon his word, I marvelled at the

ease and self-possession with which he could endure the gaze of one whom he was about to abandon to the most frightful disaster. Perhaps that strange insight which comes only at supreme moments informed us both that those glances were the last we should ever exchange; and in the expression of each a spectator might have read the character of the two men thus strangely confronted. Mine was the look of a brave gentleman who demands, earnestly, but without terror, the support to which his worth and extraordinary merits have entitled him; his, the high, cold regard of a potentate to whom men are nothing, policy everything; who can regard with indifference the groans and struggles of those whom he uses as pawns in his kingly game.

Yet even he was not wholly indifferent to the softening effects of human emotion, and presently he withdrew his gaze uneasily. He turned to Fazal Khan, who was eagerly awaiting his decision. "Proceed!" he said in a low voice.

At that there was a sudden murmur among the spectators, which died away again instantly, as all strained forward to see what was about to happen. Not a man there but guessed at the coming exposure, not a man but longed to see it, and thrilled with spiteful pleasure at the prospect of witnessing the overthrow of one so far above them.

So I believed; yet I was wrong. In that vast assembly there was yet one true and generous heart. For as the hakim was about to approach my bedside again there was a sudden stir behind me, from that spot where the men of my household stood, and in an instant my faithful Mirza Khan was standing over me, a drawn sword in his hand. Not a word

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did he speak, but he put himself in the posture of defence, and his attitude, and the proud and defiant glance he cast around showed plainly what his intention was. He could not hope to save me, but he would not stand by and see me wronged. He chose the certainty of dying in a desperate effort to defend his beloved master, rather than desert him, and live dishonoured.

O valiant heart ! Sure, tears rose in my eyes as I understood his generous intention, and remembered that I had doubted him. I would have called on him to yield, to save himself since he could not help his master. But, alas ! 'twas too late. A dozen guards rushed upon him at a sign from the Emperor ; a dozen swords flamed in the air around him. Though he fought valiantly, and would not yield, his resistance was vain ; his sword was beaten down and shattered, and the guards flung themselves upon him and bore him to the earth. In a moment he was overpowered and bound hand and foot, and the guards, acting under the hakim's orders, raised his helpless body, and carrying him outside, flung him cruelly to the ground.

Concealment could no longer be hoped for. The hakim stepped forward again, and, with a cruel smile of triumph, seized the rugs with which I had hidden my injuries, and dragged them rudely from me, exposing to the common gaze my poor wounded feet. As soon as my condition became apparent, a howl of fury went up from every throat : so great was the din that although I saw Fazal Khan before the Emperor, and understood from his gestures that he was uttering a passionate accusation against me, I could not hear a word he said. Every great Omrah, and every petty fellow who had envied my glory and

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longed to see me humbled, gave tongue now; they poured out upon me every insult and every vile word they could imagine. Their fury was so great that I believe that only the presence of the Emperor restrained them: had it not been for that they would have fallen upon me and torn me in pieces. For not only did they hate me for my success, and the manner in which I had outstripped them all, but they regarded the offence of which I had been guilty, which among civil nations is considered a subject for smiles and jests, as a dreadful crime.

Aurangzebe commanded silence, and his guards endeavoured to subdue the clamour; but the uproar was so great that it was not quelled until the Emperor himself rose from his throne and stretched out his arm. At that they fell silent again, not daring to raise their voices against the will of their Master; and throughout the scene which followed they remained mute, gazing at me intently and exhibiting in their countenances a strange mixture of awe and gratified malice. For sure, there is something frightful and awe-inspiring in the downfall of a great man. Envy and malice, which by their machinations have accomplished his overthrow, are terrified at the magnitude of the fall, and at first scarce venture to manifest their treacherous glee. Such, I doubt not, were the emotions which filled the breasts of all those envious and wicked courtiers as I lay there crippled in body, and suddenly bankrupt in fortune; and at this, the supreme moment of my overthrow, I received the tribute of a fearful and respectful silence, which none cared to break.

The Emperor remained standing as he addressed me, permitting, for the first time, the anger which perhaps he had been concealing for so long, to be-

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come manifest in his looks and tones. "O dog! son of a dog!" he cried, "is this your gratitude for all the favours I have showered upon you? By Allah! you shall pay bitterly for it. I have treated you with such kindness as I have never shown to any other: I have raised you from your contemptible station, and permitted you to hold familiar intercourse with myself. I have allowed you to accumulate those riches which you have displayed so insolently; and for every pitiful service which you have rendered me, I have given you a tenfold reward. Accursed! is this your return for all my favours? O, Fazal Khan, he is yours. Remove him quickly and do with him as you will. I adjure you, use him tenderly, so that his death may not come too soon. Wallahi! were it not for my promise to you, I would torture him with my own hand."

Although I was determined that no cowardly complaints should pass my lips, I would not submit to my fate without an effort to escape. "Ornament of the Throne," I cried, as the hakim was about to step forward, "will you condemn me unheard?"

"Nothing you can say will save you," he answered; "there is no forgiveness for an offence against Islam. Yet if you choose, you may speak; but speak quickly and have done; I cannot long endure your presence." With that he sat again on his throne, and waited for me to speak.

"Your Majesty," says I, in a courageous and dignified tone, "I do not deny my guilt, since proof of it is before you; but I shall take leave to remind you that although among Mussalmans this offence is considered so heinous, yet I have done nothing worse than any other gentleman would do who had been brought up in my country, where adventures of

this kind are not considered culpable ; nay, they are even held to confer a lustre upon a gentleman of spirit. Thus you will perceive that if I had been guilty of a momentary forgetfulness of your laws, yet my conduct is attributable rather to my nurture, than to any wilful disregard of your wishes. I am ready to make any reasonable amends to the physician, and I entreat your Majesty to allow me to meet him in single combat, and thus give him the opportunity of vindicating his honour."

"Nazarene dog!" he interrupted violently, "what are the customs of infidels to me? Your plea is so little of a defence that what you say makes me rejoice the more that it is in my power to destroy one of such a noxious race as you describe."

"Why, then," says I, hotly, unable even at such a moment to endure the insolence of his language—for after all, though he was the Emperor, yet he was no better than a barbarian, and cannot be considered the equal of a Christian gentleman—"I will remind you that since I once preserved your life you owe me the like service. Indeed, not to speak of my countless other services, you are in debt to me not alone for your life, but, if I am not mistaken, for your throne as well; for I will take leave to remind you, that had it not been for me, the Prince Mohammed Sultan would have regained his liberty, and before this it is likely that he would have dethroned you, and cast you into prison, even as you did the Emperor Shah Jehan. On this account I do not pray for my liberty; I demand it as a right."

Sure, I have many times had reason to regret that nobility of spirit which forbade me to endure patiently an insolent or offensive speech. It was this temper in me which had led to my discovery in

the physician's harem—doubtless the crafty hakim had arranged his insulting conversation with the Lady Amina to that end—; and now the same quality led me to exasperate the Emperor, who was already so much enraged. I had always known that it was impolitic to be so high; and hitherto I had consoled myself with the reflection, that if the possession of a noble and generous spirit entailed some disadvantages, it also carried with it some compensations. But now, the consequences of my rashness were more serious than before, for the Emperor rose from his throne in such a fury as I should have thought impossible to one of his cold and sardonic temper. His body shook with rage, his eyes flamed, and his twisted lip was drawn back so as to display his long, yellow teeth. “Away with him, Fazal Khan!” he cried hoarsely, “if you do not desire to lose your revenge. Away with him, or I tear him in pieces with my own hand.”

Sure, I can scarce find words to describe the frightful scene which followed, or the brutal and disgusting treatment to which I was subjected. The hakim's men seized me roughly and dragged me from my bed, notwithstanding the bruised and swollen condition of my feet; they obliged me to stand upright; and though I was nigh to swooning with the agony, I was forced to totter from the Hall, being pushed and dragged along by the ruffianly guards. As soon as I was outside the Audience Chamber, the whole mob of courtiers came pouring out, and broke around me like a sea: curses, insults, even blows were rained upon me: I was spat upon, hustled and kicked; and the fury of the mob was so great that the guards could scarce retain their hold upon me.

CHAPTER X.

I AM CAST INTO PRISON. DEATH OF MIRZA KHAN. MY FRIGHTFUL
SUFFERINGS, AND MY ESCAPE.

IN this dreadful condition, suffering at every step the most unendurable tortures, buffeted, thrust hither and thither by those who thronged around to witness my degradation, I was led away through a part of the Palace which I had never seen before. I believe, in truth, that I was only half conscious; the bodily torments which I had undergone, no less than the distress of mind which the approach and culmination of disaster had occasioned me, had almost deprived me of my senses. The insults and opprobrious terms which were showered upon me conveyed no meaning to my dulled brain; indeed, what little power of mind I had left was wholly occupied with one thought, to preserve, amid the utmost humiliation which could be thrust upon me, such a dignified and courageous demeanour as should convince my tormentors that they could by no means subdue my unconquerable spirit, notwithstanding the cruelties which their malice urged them to inflict upon me. In this endeavour I succeeded. Not the most grievous of the countless blows I received could wring a cry from me; not a man in the throng could boast that he saw me wince. Though half fainting, and almost unable to stand, I yet held my head erect; my face perhaps was pale from bodily weakness and suffering, but my eye was proud and unshrinking. In short, my bearing was such as must have shown the spiteful mob that nothing could quench the ardour of my courage.

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After passing through corridors, courtyards, and open spaces which were all unfamiliar to me, I was brought at length to the entrance to a dark and narrow passage. Beyond this point the courtiers could not follow me, for not more than two persons could walk abreast. Into this passage I was thrust, preceded and followed by the guards, and I was urged onwards by blows from behind whenever my failing strength caused me to slacken my pace; for even those common fellows, who could have no other reason to hate me than envy, were glad to have a chance of aiming a blow at the once all-powerful Frank. I was sensible that the passage dipped sharply downward, and that the floor of it was broken and uneven, two circumstances which added to the pain and difficulty of my progress. I do not know how long it was : to me it seemed well-nigh endless, but this was perhaps due to my disordered imagination, and the excessive torment which every step occasioned me. But at last the guards in front of me halted, and unlocked a door : passing through this we came to a second door, a few paces further on. When this, too, was unfastened, the brutal fellows who had charge of me thrust me suddenly forward with such violence that I lost my footing, and pitching forward, rolled down a flight of steps. I fell, as it were, into blank darkness, for at this moment consciousness deserted me, and for a brief space oblivion relieved me of my incredible sufferings.

When at length I recovered from this swoon, my misery was greatly augmented by the rough treatment I had undergone. My feet were now in a most dreadful condition, being so puffed and swollen that I believe, if it had not been that the stones in

the passage leading to the dungeon had lacerated them, and thus got rid of some of the black, feverish blood which still distended them, mortification would have set in. Besides this my body was covered all over with bruises from the blows I had received, so that I could neither sit nor lie in any position with comfort, and I was obliged to roll over and remain prone upon my face in order to relieve the pain.

For a considerable time, the torment I endured was so excessive that I paid no heed to my surroundings, and did not attempt to discover where I might be. But when my strength began to return in some degree, hope, which in a man of true courage is never extinguished while life remains, prompted me to raise my head and endeavour to see, through the darkness of the place where I lay, what kind of place I was in. My first discovery was that to each of my wrists was affixed an iron chain, so heavy that I could only lift my arms with considerable difficulty. I observed also, that the surface upon which I lay was earth, and not stone; and even in the midst of my sufferings this circumstance occasioned me a slight thrill of hope, though I did not as yet realise how it might serve me. I now examined my chains, and I found that one, which was fortunately of considerable length, so as to give me some freedom of movement when I grew stronger, was attached to the wall, which was built of solid stone. The other, which was much shorter, was fastened to some dark mass which lay upon the floor. I believe that I had not yet fully regained my senses, for I lay stupidly regarding this object for a long time, without in the least suspecting what it might be. But, as my eyes grew more accustomed to the dim light, and my

brain gradually became clearer, I began to take note of its outlines, and while I was doing so the puzzle was suddenly resolved, and I realised that it was a man, though whether alive or dead I did not know.

After calling several times without obtaining any reply, I began, at the cost of incredible pain and labour, to drag my body along the ground until I was close to the man. When at last I could see his face, and ascertained that it was Mirza Khan, I do not know whether I felt more of horror or delight. At first, I could hardly refrain from open and bitter lamentation, at the thought that this faithful creature, who had no other fault than that of loyalty to his master, should have been dragged down by me in my fall, and was like to share whatever dreadful fate might be in store for me. This was my first emotion, and yet I cannot deny that the knowledge that I was not entirely alone in this dreadful place, and that at the moment of my ruin, when all men had execrated me, there was yet one to whom my virtues and my benevolence had so endeared me that he could not find it in his heart to desert me, was excessively comforting. My feelings were thus mixed, and doubtless, if my situation had been less unfortunate, I should have discovered in this circumstance a proof of that great truth of which I have ever been convinced, that even in the most dreadful misfortunes a discerning eye may discover cause for some rejoicing.

My first care was to ascertain whether my poor servant yet lived. Although I could not move without experiencing the severest agony, I made shift to place my hand upon his breast, and when I perceived a feeble flutter of his heart I fell into a trans-

port of delight, so excessive that for a moment I forgot all my woes. But I became once more conscious of them when I attempted to take some means to recover him from his swoon; for I found myself so helpless as to be unable to accomplish anything for his relief. It was, as I have said, only at the cost of such pain and labour as brought me nigh to swooning myself, that I could move my hands at all; and even if I had been free, I had neither water to lave his wounds, nor anything to bind them up with.

But in spite of all these difficulties, I examined him as well as my condition and the feeble light would allow, and I rejoice to find that, save for some inconsiderable bruises and scratches, he had received only one wound, a blow which had left a great raw patch on his head, all bedabbled with blood. Unhappily, I could do no more for him than push the hair away from his wound, and endeavour so to alter his position that he might lie more at his ease. Having done this, I was well nigh exhausted, and lay still, for a while, to recover from my exertions, and wait until nature should restore his consciousness to my unfortunate companion.

It was many hours before he showed the least sign of life; and during this time I tried to divert my mind from my present misfortunes by considering the events which had led to them, and discovering how far, if at all, I had been in fault. I am not one of those who are ever ready to attribute to the malignity of Fate, the disasters which their own follies have caused; and who will blame the neglect of their friends, the assiduity of their foes, blind chance, ay, or heaven itself, rather than themselves, who are the true authors of their misfortunes. It

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has ever been my practice to judge my own conduct with greater severity than that of others, and to search out, with a view to amendment, every particular in which it has fallen short of perfection.

Since all my misfortunes had originated in my unlucky visit to the Lady Amina, I began to consider that matter, and to question whether I had acted foolishly. I could not conceal from myself that to penetrate into the harem of a Mogul was in itself an act of rashness, which might reasonably be expected to lead to danger. But then, what gentleman of spirit, receiving an invitation from a noble lady would decline it on the score of a little risk to himself? Faith, not I! though I shall admit that had I known that Fazal Khan was the lord of that harem, I had sooner cast myself over a precipice than enter it.

It was perhaps owing to the apprehensions which had filled my mind during the past few hours, that I only now perceived what ought to have been evident to me; that is, that the invitation of the Lady Amina had been sent by order of the hakim, who had designed thus to entice me into his power. No sooner did this idea occur to my mind, than I became convinced of the truth of it. I recollected that the fair traitress had seemed very little alarmed when we were disturbed by the approach of her lord, although her women had fallen into ecstasies of terror. I had attributed this fact to her courageous disposition; but I now understood that it was owing to her foreknowledge of what was about to happen.

Although I could no longer doubt, yet I could hardly contain my astonishment at the strength of that hatred which had enabled the hakim to admit

me to his harem, and thus violate the most sacred prejudices of the Moguls in order that he might compass my destruction. Truly, I reflected, against such an unconquerable enmity as this, even the courage and resource of an O'Connor might well prove of no avail.

The more I considered the matter, the more clearly did I perceive the wonderful cunning with which my foe had woven his net about me. In no particular was this more apparent than in his choice of a bait wherewith to attract me. For already, as I have related, he and his contemptible ally the Minister had twice tried to strike at me through a woman. Recollecting this, the crafty hakim had justly considered that I should be prepared for anything rather than another attempt of the same kind. In this he was right : on receiving the Lady Amina's message, the notion that it might be a trap had indeed occurred to me ; but I had put it aside, telling myself that my foe was not so barren of resources, nor so lacking in ingenuity, as to be unable to find some new and unexpected way of injuring me. Now, when it was too late, I understood this, and my opinion of his address, already so high, was vastly augmented by this fresh proof of his subtlety.

With such reflections I tried to occupy my mind ; but my sufferings were so intense that after a time they became unendurable, and I was fain to burst out into the most bitter lamentations. " Alack ! " I cried, " can it be that Providence created me, to perish thus miserably in a heathen land ? Is there no better fate than this in store for the famous Count O'Connor, the hero of so many daring exploits, and the admiration of every capital in

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Europe? Were this noble presence and these unrivalled qualities of mind, given to me for no better end than to rot in a dungeon, or to be destroyed by the cruelties of a treacherous savage? And thou, poor faithful wretch," I continued, turning to Mirza Khan, "would that I had perished before I brought this fate upon thee."

I had scarcely uttered these words when a faint sound reached my ears. I listened, and after a few moments I had the unspeakable joy of recognising the voice of Mirza Khan. "Master," he murmured, "Master," and some feeble words followed which I was unable to distinguish.

I instantly forgot my own sufferings, and directed my attention to the endeavour to succour my faithful servant. By dint of incredible exertions I dragged him at last to the stone wall and raised him to a sitting position; and the effect of this was soon apparent, for the blood left his head, he revived quickly, and in a very short time he became perfectly sensible and able to converse.

No sooner did he comprehend our desperate plight, than he fell to weeping, and I shall not deny that I was unable to refrain from doing the same. For a short time I mingled my tears with those of that poor heathen: I confess it without shame, for what, after all, are rank, race, or breeding, by comparison with a warm and faithful heart? This unhappy creature had shown himself to be capable of a loyal affection such as many a Christian gentleman might do well to imitate.

We continued for a time in this affecting situation, until at last I considered it necessary to put an end to an indulgence which could do nothing to relieve

our material woes, however grateful the relief it afforded to our feelings. So I drew a little apart, and directing my fellow in a kindly voice to endeavour to compose himself, I waited until the violence of his agitation had subsided, and then addressed him in these words :

“ You are not to suppose that, because we are at present so deeply plunged in misfortune, all hope is at an end. On the contrary, we are still alive, which in itself is no inconsiderable marvel, and one that we could hardly have looked for. Were you acquainted with the usages of civil nations, I should remind you of the saying commonly repeated in Europe, that while so much as one breath remains to the great Count O'Connor, his enemies cannot feel that they are safe. I have been in straits more desperate even than this, and as you see, I have escaped unharmed. Besides, you should recollect that it is no more than a year since I arrived at Agra ; and that I was then in a situation not very much better than this, having neither money nor servants, and being unknown to any person of influence in this city. If I have been able in so short a time to raise myself to a position of such magnificence as that which I lately filled, do you suppose that now, when my very life is at stake, I shall be unable to devise some means of escape ? Do not deceive yourself ; my career is not yet ended. I shall assuredly triumph over my enemies, and you may content yourself with the knowledge that as you shared in my disaster, so shall you partake of my renewed prosperity.”

In truth, I was by no means so confident as I pretended to be ; but my object was to reassure my

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servant, and in this I succeeded, for the simple fellow had seen so many astonishing proofs of my address that he could not suppose I should fail in anything I chose to undertake. It was highly important to encourage in him this reliance on my powers, for I knew that if I should be able to conceive some plan of escape, his aid would be necessary, and this could only be made effective by arousing a confident hope in his bosom. But although I would not allow him to perceive it, I could not refrain from recalling some of those horrible tales of Mogul vengeance, of which I had heard so many; and at times my blood ran cold as I thought of what was like to be my fate if I should be unable to make my escape.

I believe that it was as much with a view of relieving my own mind of these dismal apprehensions, as of encouraging him, that I continued to talk in the most hopeful fashion, pointing out every circumstance in which, by the exercise of my utmost ingenuity, I could find some food for hope. Thus I drew his attention to the fact which I had already noticed, that the floor, instead of being of stone, as might have been expected in a dungeon, was of soft, damp earth, which could very easily be tunnelled. "If only we can secure two or three days," I continued, "we may perhaps succeed in digging beneath the foundation of the walls, and so get clear." I had not, it is true, forgotten the chains upon our wrists; but I forebore to remind him of this, and I had the satisfaction of seeing that he was greatly cheered by my confidence.

I now began to find that the constant activity of my life, and the many hardships I had endured,

brought me some recompense in my hour of need ; for despite the grievous nature of my wounds, I very quickly began to recover my strength, and before a day had passed there was a notable decrease in the swelling of my feet. The greatest difficulty I had to contend against was the lack of nourishment. During the first three or four days of our imprisonment no one visited us, with the exception of a guard, who flung open the door at irregular intervals, and cast in some fragments of food. But so barbarous was this fellow, and so indifferent to our sufferings, that he did not trouble himself as to whether we had anything to eat or not, and several times the wretched fragments he brought us lay upon the ground just beyond our reach, so that to the torture of hunger was added the misery of seeing that which would relieve it almost within our grasp, and yet being unable to come at it.

We continued thus for three days, and by the end of that time my sufferings, although still severe, were sensibly diminished, and I believe that if my hands had been at liberty I might have made shift to begin digging. But I observed, with alarm as well as grief, that my poor servant made no progress towards recovery. He lay for a great part of the time in a kind of stupor, from which he would rouse himself with difficulty when I spoke to him. I began to fear that the wound in his head was more serious than I had imagined ; but, unhappily, I had no means of ascertaining how this might be, or of doing anything to relieve him. Nevertheless, I spared no efforts to rouse him from his lethargy ; I engaged him in conversation on every conceivable subject, and that when I was myself almost fainting

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from fatigue and misery, in order that I might preserve him from falling again into that condition of stupor from which I found it increasingly difficult to bring him back.

On the third day, when I was engaged in these benevolent efforts, the door of my dungeon was flung open, and the hakim Fazal Khan entered. I had fully expected that he would come before long to gloat over my miserable situation, and perhaps to inflict upon me, in this secret dungeon, such horrible tortures as malice and ingenuity might suggest to him. I had resolved that I would not afford him the gratification which he would derive from seeing me give the least sign either of dejection at my present condition or fear of what might be about to befall me. I therefore met his gaze calmly, with the greatest indifference and composure, and remained thus, lying at my ease, and watching him quietly, until he saw fit to address me.

Two servants had entered with him, bearing a rug which they spread upon the noisome floor in a spot just beyond the limits to which my chain confined me. Their master seated himself comfortably upon the rug, and directed them to withdraw. When they had gone, the hakim fixed his gaze upon me; I returned his look with an insolence equal to his own, and for the space of several minutes no word was spoken between us. Mirza Khan watched us both quietly, wondering I daresay, in his simple mind, whether I should not, by some extraordinary address, turn the tables on our enemy, and put him to confusion.

It was one of the most dangerous qualities of this subtle and treacherous man, that he never suffered

his passions to dominate his reason, or to lead him into the least indiscretion. The only time I had ever seen him betray any outward marks of passion was on the occasion when my intrusion into his harem was publicly discovered ; and I have very little doubt but that he willingly allowed his emotion to become visible then in order to strengthen his claim to vengeance. But now, when he had me in his power, and when there were no witnesses of his bearing save his two miserable victims, he still preserved his usual suavity of demeanour ; he vilified me in courteous tones, and described his villainous intentions in the most gentle and pleasing voice that can be imagined.

“ You dog ! ” he said softly. “ You obscene offspring of dishonourable parents ! You hell-begotten infidel ! At length I have You in my grasp.”

I cannot write down the fourth part of what he said ; for, indeed, the abuse he showered upon me was so vile that it cannot be repeated. It was enough to say that he amused himself in this way for some time, and gratified his malice by heaping upon me every disgraceful epithet he could think of. To all this I paid very little heed, being more concerned with what he was about to do than with what he might be pleased to say. I continued to regard him in contemptuous silence, and I believe that my indifference and insensibility to his taunts angered him ; for he had the barbarity to draw forth suddenly a long pliant wand from beneath his clothing, and to fetch me such a grievous stripe with it upon my still swollen foot as to wring a cry from me, despite my resolution not to afford him such a gratification.

He appeared to be excessively diverted by my out-

cry, and by the sudden movement I made to draw my feet out of his reach ; and he continued to chuckle for several minutes with every mark of enjoyment. I daresay he would have proceeded further with his cruelty, but that he intended, as he presently informed me, to give me every opportunity of recovering my full strength, in order that I might the longer endure the tortures he proposed to inflict upon me.

“ Which will you choose, Cánar Sahib ? ” he asked with mocking politeness. “ Will you be smeared with honey, and bound upon an ant heap to be slowly devoured ; or shall I have you buried neck-deep in sand, with your shaven skull exposed to the comforting heat of the sun, and just sufficient water given you to keep you alive to the tenth day ? Shall I flay you delicately, or boil you alive in a cauldron ? What ! are these joys so sweet that you cannot choose between them ? ” he continued when I gave no sign that I had heard him. “ Fear not ; you shall taste of all these and many others, and I shall take care that your life shall be prolonged to the utmost, that you may enjoy these delights to the full.”

I knew so well what my fate was like to be that his words gave me no additional uneasiness. Finding at last that he could not move me, he summoned the guards, and gave them directions that I was to be tended with the most diligent care. He made them wash my wounds, and smear them with an ointment which sensibly relieved the inflammation. and he then made them perform the same offices for Mirza Khan. When this had been done, he ordered food and water to be brought, and set carefully within our reach. I was in a mind to grind these into the sodden floor with my heel, in order to

frustrate his spiteful designs; but I refrained, for after all, I thought, if any chance of escape should arise, it will profit me little to have lost the power to seize it, through having taken insufficient food.

At length he left us, secretly grieved, I believe, that he had not been able to make me show signs of fear. When he was gone, feeling considerably relieved by the ministrations of the guards, I turned to my poor servant, and I derived great satisfaction from the discovery that he too had been benefited. He seemed to be a good deal easier, and for the first time since the catastrophe he showed some signs of the sprightly manner which used to distinguish him. This fact occasioned me so much pleasure that I began to indulge myself with the hope that perhaps, after all, it might be possible to escape. I discussed the matter with him for a long time, but we could come to no other conclusion than that we could do nothing unless we should be able to find some way of getting free of our chains.

In truth, this seemed an obstacle impossible to overcome; nevertheless, I would not give in, partly because I did in truth entertain some faint hopes, but still more because I desired to encourage Mirza Khan. I cast about me for some implement with which, by diligent rubbing, I might cut through a link of the chain, but I could find nothing which would answer the purpose. In this difficulty I conceived that I might perhaps effect my end by chafing the ring upon my wrist against the wall; but on trying this, I found that the stone was so soft that it would make no impression on the steel. It now seemed that there was no way out of the difficulty, and I became convinced that we should never

escape. Nevertheless, I would not admit this ; for I feared that if he should lose hope, Mirza Khan might sink again into the distressing condition from which he had so lately been roused. The disappearance of the faint light in our dungeon now informed me that the night was come ; and I therefore directed the poor fellow to compose himself to slumber, assuring him that beyond all doubt I should have discovered, before the morning, some way of doing what I desired.

But, alas ! all my efforts on his behalf were in vain. When I awoke in the morning, I found that he was once more bereft of sense, and though I laboured long and hard to recover him, and used every means I could think of to that end, I could effect no improvement in his condition. Throughout that day, and the next, he lay in a stupor, only at intervals regaining a sort of energy, in which he poured out all kinds of wild ravings. In these fits the name of his beloved master was constantly upon his lips, and was never uttered save with some expression of devotion or respect. When I heard him speak thus, and reflected upon what I had brought him to, I endured such anguish as I have never suffered at any other time ; for indeed, to a man of sensibility, there is nothing so terrible as the reflection that he has been the cause of misfortune to those who love him, and are dependent upon him.

Yet in spite of my grief, I could do nothing for him. When the guards came in to bring our food, I laid aside that dignified composure which I had hitherto maintained, and besought them, with an eagerness which no danger to myself could have persuaded me to use, that they would take measures to

succour him. They did what they could for him, less from humanity than from fear of the hakim; but in truth he was beyond all help. He became gradually weaker, the sudden outbursts of madness which I have described grew fewer, and at length ceased, and he lay for many hours senseless. During the whole of this time I watched beside him, laying my hand upon his breast from time to time to mark the beating of his heart.

Alas! it grew fainter and fainter, until at last I knew that he was about to perish. I determined that this faithful creature should die in my arms, and I drew his head on to my breast. At last it seemed that the heart-beats had ceased altogether, and I believed that he was dead. But even as I thought this his eyes opened, and looked into mine with an expression of so much devotion and loyalty as showed me that he was conscious, and was grateful to me for my care of him. He tried to speak, and after a moment he muttered, so faintly that I could scarcely hear, "Master . . . escape." He then lay still for so long that I thought his life must at last have fled; but suddenly I felt his limbs quiver, and to my astonishment he heaved his body up to a sitting posture. "Allaho Akbar!" he cried in a loud voice. "La illah il—" The Mussalman watchword died away in a sort of gurgle in his throat, and the next instant he had fallen lifeless upon my breast.

Now that the misfortune which I had been dreading had at last fallen upon me, I fell into such a state of despair that for several hours I was bereft of all sense, and raved like a madman. When I recovered some degree of self-control, my grief was so poignant

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that I was tempted to put a period to my misery by ending my existence. In truth, no more dreadful misfortune than this could have assailed me. For not only was I deprived of a servant whom I loved, and who had given me such proofs of his devotion, but I had lost the companionship which alone had enabled me to bear with some degree of fortitude the ruin which had overtaken me; and further, I could no longer look for his aid in making my escape, if any chance should offer. It is not surprising then, that under the stress of this dreadful calamity, my courage should so far have deserted me that I thought of destroying myself. But that Providence which has so often befriended me now came to my aid once more; and by denying me any instrument, by means of which I could have effected my purpose, preserved me from bringing my life to an end which would ill have fitted such a career as mine.

Readers of these Memoirs must frequently have observed, perhaps with surprise, and certainly with admiration, that although I have suffered such frightful calamities as I suppose no gentleman ever endured, yet I have never been so overwhelmed by misfortune but I could discover some mitigation of my misery, and renew my courage by a contemplation of those circumstances which seemed to offer me some consolation. So it was now. When the first violence of my grief had passed, I resolutely set myself to find some light amid the blackness of my sorrow; nor did I fail in this endeavour. For there was one point which I was able to regard with a melancholy satisfaction; that is to say, by his death my poor servant was spared whatever dreadful fate might be in store for me. Indeed, the more I

thought of the matter, the more convinced I became that there was now no hope of escape, and on this account I was enabled even to rejoice that death had saved Mirza Khan from the cruelties of our foes. I could not but marvel at the justness of that Fate, which had decreed that as a reward for his unfailing loyalty to myself, he should pass quietly away before his persecutors could work their savage will upon him.

In these and similar reflections I passed a whole day and night, and I was only aroused from my meditations by a circumstance of the most distressing and urgent nature. Owing to the close air and the great heat of my dungeon, I found that the proximity of the body of my poor servant was becoming intolerable ; in fact, putrefaction had already advanced so far, that it was imperative that the body should be removed. The chain which fastened my wrist to his was no more than three or four feet in length ; and to make matters worse, out of respect to the dead man I had composed his limbs and crossed his hands upon his breast. The rigour of death had now fixed them immovably in this position, so that I was denied even the slight relief which I might have had by withdrawing to the length of his outstretched arm. I cannot describe what I suffered on this account : I dragged myself as far away as possible and lay down, with my head turned away from him, to endure as best I could the new misery which Fate had inflicted upon me.

I had to wait several hours before the guards came in again with food. They had indeed entered soon after Mirza Khan died ; but seeing us both lie prostrate, as though sleeping, they had paid no heed to

us, and as I was then overwhelmed with grief, I had not acquainted them with the circumstance of his death. I regretted this oversight now ; and when at length they came in again, I informed them of what had happened, and desired them to release me without further delay from the body of my companion. They hesitated : incredible as such barbarity must seem to the polite reader, they were in doubt whether they should comply with my request. To convince them, I ventured to remind them of Fazal Khan's directions to them, that they were to have particular care of my health, and I pointed out the danger of leaving me so close to a decomposing body. This decided them, and at last they set about removing the chain from Mirza Khan's wrist. Already I began to breathe more freely, in anticipation of my approaching relief. Sure, it must have been a malign Fate which prompted the hakim to appear at that moment.

The guards gave over their employment in order to salute him, and he inquired with a great deal of asperity what they might be at. When they told him, he flew into a furious rage, and so great was his mortification at finding that one of his victims had escaped him, that he had the wickedness to accuse me of having killed him. I would not deign to reply to this, and my silence still further enraged him. To gratify his malice he forbade the guards, on pain of death, to release me from the corpse ; and having repeated this command with a menacing air, he left the dungeon, flinging at me a taunt, with regard to what I was to endure in consequence, of such a disgusting nature that I cannot repeat it.

I must describe what followed in the fewest pos-

sible words. My sufferings from the dreadful odour, and from the countless flies, which somehow found their way into the dungeon, became at length intolerable. Yet it was long before I could bring myself to use the only means of relief which I could discover. But at length necessity drove me to this course; in brief, with the heavy links of my chain, I crushed the bones of my poor servant's hand until I was able to force it through the ring around the wrist; and after accomplishing this dreadful task, which made me almost swoon with repugnance, I retired to the furthest limit of the longer chain which bound me to the wall. Thus, at the cost of doing violence to the tender feelings of respect with which I regarded the dead body of my friend, I was able to secure some relief. Yet it was but slight after all; and I became convinced that before long I should fall a victim to some dreadful fever. I even rejoiced at the prospect, for I felt that my sufferings had now passed the bounds of human endurance.

Wise men have frequently observed that when we are reduced to the lowest depths of misery, we may most reasonably expect some relief. This is true, and yet how rarely do we remember it when we are in the grip of misfortune! In my lonely dungeon, oppressed as I was by every imaginable ill, I certainly did not suppose that help was near; on the contrary, my spirit was so weakened by calamity that I had no longer any hope, nor even a desire, of a change. Yet at this moment deliverance was approaching.

When I had released myself from the dead body in the horrible manner I have described, it was about nightfall. I was now too exhausted to sleep in an ordinary manner; but I fell into a kind of

insensibility to my surroundings. From this I was aroused by a feeling, which grew upon me, that someone was calling, "Master, Master!" I believe that I heard this sound many times before it conveyed any meaning to me; but at last I sat up with a start, half supposing that it was the spirit of Mirza Khan which addressed me. It is impossible for me to describe the feeling of astonishment with which I perceived a feeble light at the end of my dungeon, the rays of which illumined the homely but pleasing countenance of my man Nathoo.

In my enfeebled state I was quite unable to guess what had happened. The sight of those familiar black features affected me with the keenest sense of pleasure, which I had no other way of expressing than by bursting into a fit of mingled weeping and laughter. To Nathoo, who had seen me only in the days of my prosperity, this behaviour was sufficiently strange; but he quickly realised the truth—that I was no more than half sensible—and he came over to where I lay, placed his lamp upon the ground, and endeavoured, with many uncouth yet tender gestures, to sooth my agitation. I yielded to his ministrations, and presently lay down quietly, being still unable to comprehend what was afoot.

I was certainly in a fever, for not even Nathoo's astonishing appearance could rouse me to a full comprehension of what was taking place. I lay in this condition of bewilderment for a long time, wondering stupidly at a low continuous grating sound close to me. However, after a time my wits returned to me, and I found that the noise was being made by Nathoo, who was busy filing the ring around my wrist. I must have been lying there for a considerable time, for he had already cut through the

ring in one place; but it was so thick that he could not prise it open, and he was obliged to cut it in another place in order to release me. He worked hard at this, and in the meantime, seeing me sensible once more, he gave me an explanation of his surprising appearance.

I had done him a grievous injustice, for knowing him to be of a softer nature than Mirza Khan, I had supposed that no help was to be looked for from him. Yet it appeared that the faithful creature had been working on my behalf ever since I had been imprisoned. He gave me a long account of all that he had done, of which the substance was that he had first ascertained, by some careful inquiries, the position of my dungeon, and found, to his great delight, that it was beneath the banks of the river Jumna. He then began to tunnel, working only by night; and more by good luck than by calculation, his burrow had emerged within the place where I was confined.

'Twas simple enough, but I reproached myself that during the whole time of my imprisonment I had scarce given a thought to the poor fellow who had come to my rescue, save to wonder what had become of him, and whether he, too, had become involved in my ruin. But I privately resolved that I would make up to him for this neglect, if I should succeed in getting clear.

He persevered with his task, and at length the chain which held me to the wall fell from my arm. As to the other short chain which had fastened me to the dead man, we did not stay to remove that, for we could not feel safe until we had left the dungeon. Nathoo urged me to come at once, and I yielded to his entreaties, though first I went and

kneeled alone by the side of Mirza Khan, and paid my last respects to that staunch and faithful man. I could not withhold a few tears at the thought of leaving his poor body behind me, but I did not suffer my feelings to influence my conduct, for I reflected that it was due to Nathoo that I should make no unnecessary delay. The Gentoo stood watching me, and even at that moment he could not so far control his features as to rid them of an expression of the jealousy and contempt he felt for the Mussalman. I believe that his joy at being able to rescue me was augmented by the thought that Mirza Khan, though he was with me, had been unable to do anything to assist me.

It was indeed a grievous journey that I had to perform through the tunnel, for the wounds on my feet, though much better and less inflamed, were not yet healed. But I had now such just grounds for hope, that I could have endured far greater difficulties. I disregarded the pain of my wounds, and groped my way through the blackness of the tunnel as best I could. Even before I came within view of the end of it I could feel a cool, refreshing draught of air, which played upon my forehead and so far revived me that I made light of the difficulties of my progress. At length, after dragging myself painfully through the darkness, I came suddenly on the entrance of the tunnel, which opened in the sloping bank of the river. Nathoo had moored his boat underneath, and after resting for a few moments at the mouth of the tunnel, I lowered myself into it with some difficulty, and lost no time in casting off, and a moment later we were slipping fast down the stream.

CHAPTER XI.

IN HIDING. I AM REPAID FOR MY KINDNESS TO THE PHILOSOPHER.
AN EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURE.

My rescue had been so swift and unexpected that even now I found it hard to believe that it had actually been accomplished. Indeed, the events of the past few days had been of so extraordinary a nature that it is not to be wondered at that I felt so bewildered at the rapid changes in my circumstances. I reminded myself that no more than a week ago I had been at the zenith of my power and prosperity; I had never heard of the Lady Amina; and if anyone had told me that within the space of seven short days I should be skulking down the Jumna by night, and thinking myself supremely blessed in that I was able to feel the cool free air of heaven upon my brow, I should have accounted him a madman. But indeed, at this moment, the night breeze which stirred my hair was to me more precious than the luxuries I had enjoyed at the time of my greatest prosperity, since it was a proof of my freedom. I gazed up at the stars, at which I had so often glanced without giving them a thought; now they were the most blessed sight upon which my eyes could have rested. No doubt at times I have been, like other men, less grateful for the favours of Providence than I should have been; but at this moment my heart was full of thankfulness, and I reproached myself for my impiety in supposing that a heavenly power could have brought me safely through so many dangers, only to leave me to perish miserably in this heathen land.

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It has ever astonished me to note how quickly a brave man, who has been on the very point of death, will throw off the recollection of his misfortunes, and once again direct his attention to the affairs of life. So it was with me now. But an hour before I was the most miserable of men, looking for nothing but death; and so crushed by unmerited woe as to have lost all desire for life. Now my mind began once more to be busied with plans and schemes for the future; and as soon as I turned my thoughts in this direction, I called to mind a circumstance which afforded me the greatest gratification, namely, that owing to my wise precautions, the fortune which I had acquired with so much diligence and labour was still intact; so that although I was fallen miserably from my pinnacle of success, yet I had gained, at least in a considerable measure, the end which I had come to the Indies to serve.

For a moment, indeed, I suffered myself to indulge some wild hopes of regaining my former splendid position at the Court; but a very little reflection convinced me that I must abandon the notion. Even had he desired to do so, popular detestation of my offence would have forbidden Aurungzebe to pardon me. Moreover, even if I could have overcome this difficulty, I could never remove from men's minds the recollection of the humiliation I had been forced to suffer; and a gentleman of my spirit could not endure that people should recall a circumstance of this nature. No: I decided that I must be content with the fortune I had gained, and must direct my efforts to preserving this, and avoiding the pursuit which would certainly arise when my escape should become known. One other object I kept before me: to be revenged upon the villainous hakim, not so

much for the ill-treatment he had inflicted upon me, though certainly that increased my resentment, but for the dreadful fate to which he had devoted the Lady Kishna.

Such were the reflections with which I occupied my mind, while my good Nathoo directed our boat down the dark stream. It was, indeed, fortunate that the flush of the rainy season had not yet all run off, for although the Jumna is a considerable stream, yet in the dry season it is so shrunken, and below the citadel the current is so much interrupted by drifting sandbanks, that we might have found it hard to drop down the river as far as the spot which Nathoo had chosen for our refuge.

But as things were, we made brave progress, and at last, when we had come some distance from the city, my man directed the boat to one of those small islets which are no more than banks of sand, and are completely submerged in the time of full flood. This islet was, perhaps, an acre in extent, and was entirely covered by a thick jungle of grasses, or rushes, which grew to the height of about eight feet, so that a man walking through it would be completely hidden. We landed on this spot, and our first care was to draw the boat completely out of the water, and hide it among the grasses. This was no light task, for I had not yet recovered from the wounds in my feet, and could give but little help. But by dint of perseverance we got the boat safely hidden at last; and then Nathoo led the way through the grasses to the centre of the islet, where he had cleared a space a few feet in area, and had constructed a rough shelter with some sticks and the rushes which he had cut down, thus producing as snug a hiding-place as anyone could wish for.

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The honest fellow had not forgotten to store the place with supplies of various kinds; among other things he had some healing balsam, which I applied to the wounds in my feet, thereby gaining considerable relief. After attending to my wants, and doing all he could to relieve me—for I still suffered considerably—he took a position near me, and squatting on the ground, inquired what plans I should adopt for the future.

“My faithful fellow,” I replied, “I have not as yet completed my plans, as you may suppose; but I shall inform you of the objects I shall keep in view. In the first place, it is necessary to secure our escape from these regions, for it is not my intention to return to the Court. It will, perhaps, surprise you to hear that I have a large fortune in precious stones, hidden away in a convenient place; thus our wants will be provided for. It is my intention to carry you with me to Europe, if that should be agreeable to you, for I am persuaded that it would be dangerous for you to remain in a country where the power of the Great Mogul might reach you. I have also another end to accomplish, namely, to reward the hakim for his treachery; and I propose, if it should be possible, to seize his person, and carry him with me in some disguise. This part of my plan I have not yet fully considered; but there can be no doubt but that I shall devise some means of doing what I desire.”

I observed that as he listened to my speech he gave some signs of disquietude; and on my telling him that he might speak what was in his mind, he protested in the most eager manner against the action I proposed to take in regard to the hakim. “For, indeed, Master,” he said, “I am persuaded

that the Emperor does not desire you ill, and will make no very great efforts to pursue you if you will leave the neighbourhood. But if he should discover that you are still here, he cannot refrain from taking you again. Therefore, I adjure you to abandon your intentions against the hakim, which can only lead to misfortune. Besides, even if you should succeed in capturing him, and getting away, what then? How can we two be ever on the watch, day and night? Sooner or later he will evade us, and escaping, rouse the country to pursue and capture us."

I could not but observe that he now used a new manner of addressing me. In the day of my glory he had spoken to me as a slave to a great noble, but now that fashion of address was gone. He spoke to me with respect, it is true, but more as though he were addressing an equal. I attributed this change to the effect which my disaster had upon his mind, and from this circumstance I drew confirmation of my wisdom in refusing to attempt to regain my position at Court. It must not be supposed that Nathoo had lost his affection for me, or that he had a desire to be insolent. On the contrary, he was himself unconscious of any change, and at first he would now and again stop and correct himself with a puzzled look when he used any expression which seemed to him too familiar. But I very well understood what had happened. Formerly he had regarded me as invincible, and my extraordinary and unflinching success had filled him with a kind of awe. But now that I was fallen, he found that I was but a man, liable to failure like others; and though his loyalty and affection never changed, yet he was never again able to regard me with that childlike

admiration with which my former glory had inspired him. I was sensible of how matters lay, and while I insisted upon his showing me the respect due to his master—as, indeed, he desired to do—I did not expect him to regard me with a feeling which had become impossible to him.

“Doubtless there is some truth in what you say,” I replied, “but it is not to be expected that you could comprehend the way in which a gentleman regards these matters. It is enough for you to know that I am so set upon the destruction of this villainous physician, that I had rather surrender myself again to the Emperor than forego my revenge. It is useless to attempt to dissuade me, for I cannot be induced to abandon an intention I have once taken, and in this matter I am resolved. As for your personal safety, you are not to suppose that because you see me here, fugitive and beset, I am unable to protect those who are faithful to me. Be easy therefore; no harm shall come to you if only you will attend to my commands, and act boldly and without hesitation when I require it. At present you have only seen me successful; it shall now be your privilege to learn that the famous Cánar Sahib is never so terrible as when Fate seems to be against him.”

This confident manner of speech reassured the fellow, whose courage and reliance in my powers had been shaken by my untoward fortunes. He protested his unhesitating trust in my protection, and assured me that only his desire for my welfare had emboldened him to differ from me. I observed with satisfaction that he really became more cheerful and confident; and I drew promise of success from this, for it showed me that I had not yet lost my

power of commanding the loyalty and devotion of my subordinates. I now desired him to withdraw a little from me, for I wished to consider my plans ; and during the greater part of the day I remained alone, pondering over the future and encouraging the growth and development of an idea which had sprung up in my mind. At length, when the sun had begun to decline, I called Nathoo to me, and began to question him as follows :

“ Listen, Nathoo,” I said. “ Answer me strictly, for upon what I learn from your replies hangs my future course of action. First, I desire to be informed whether you know anything of the customs of those philosophers whom you call Saddhus, to whom, as you are aware, I have at sundry times offered some kindnesses.”

“ Why, Master,” he answered, “ I know that some of them are very holy men, who by reason of their austerities have attained wisdom. But there are among them some very great rogues, who have taken to that way of life to escape the consequences of their crimes, or in some cases because they do not wish to work, and they get an easy living, and great respect from the common people.”

“ That is as I had conceived,” I replied, very well pleased with what he said. “ You shall now inform me whether a certain one of them is a real holy man, or whether he is one of that idle and dissolute sort that you have described to me. I speak of that person who goes loaded with iron chains, and lies upon a spiked bed ; to whom, as you will recollect, I performed a very signal service by delivering him from the assaults of some Mussalmans, whose Prophet he had derided.”

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“ I know very well whom you mean, Master,” said my servant, “ but I cannot give your Honour the information you desire. He was much spoken of in the bazaars ; indeed, some considerable quarrels arose on his account ; for while one party held that he was a thief who had been expelled from the territories of a petty Raja, there were others who considered that he must be a Saddhu of the utmost sanctity, and these pointed to his extraordinary austerities in support of their contention. Indeed it is true, and a fact well-known in the city, that he lies for two or three hours every day upon his spiked bed, and certainly the weight of all those chains, which are riveted around his neck so that they cannot be removed, must form a very grievous burden. Yet I have heard many tales about him, and there was one man in the bazaar who swore that he had known him from a child up, and that he is a notorious robber.”

I was not ill-pleased to hear that the sage bore such a doubtful reputation ; and after considering awhile, I issued some orders which very much astonished my simple Nathoo, who had already professed bewilderment at the nature of my questionings. To be brief, I directed him to go secretly to the city, as soon as it was dark, and ascertain whether my philosopher was still in those parts ; and further, if he could discover him, to bring him to my hiding-place, using the utmost secrecy and precaution lest he should be observed. The fellow could not conceal the curiosity which my words aroused in him ; but I would not suffer him to ask any questions, and I kept him quiet by occupying the time until it was dark enough for him to start in giving him some

very particular instructions concerning the precautions he was to observe. I made him swear to omit no one of the measures for safety which I had prescribed, and at length he set forth, still very much puzzled, as I could see, but willing to do his best.

When he was gone, I was inclined to doubt whether it was wise on my part to remain here alone, being so weakened by my sufferings as to be incapable of defence. Yet a little thought convinced me that I was safe enough; and as I listened to the dark stream slipping past my place of refuge, I felt that I was in a manner cut off from the world; the sky above me, water around, and no more than a handful of sand and rushes beneath me. I am persuaded that in all the Indies I could have found no spot safer, whether from the prying of my foes, or from the assaults of savage beasts, than this islet in the midst of the waters; though it was no more than a few miles distant from the city, where dwelt those who hated me, and were set upon my destruction.

My good Nathoo returned sooner than I expected, and he had followed my instructions so carefully that he was successful in bringing with him that singular personage whom I desired to see. This philosopher, who had assumed a name belonging to the ancient extinct language of the country, so long and outlandish that I cannot remember it, presented a spectacle truly admirable and extraordinary. He was perfectly naked, and his skin, which perhaps had originally been dark brown, was burned quite black by his habit of going bare in the sun. Either to conceal this blackness, or for some reason

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which I do not understand—it is a common custom with these originals—his body was smeared all over with dust and ashes. His hair and beard were untrimmed, and had grown to an extraordinary length, and they were so matted and tangled with dirt that I am persuaded that the knots therein could not have been unravelled with a comb without tearing up the roots. I am quite certain that he had never washed any part of himself for many years; indeed, the odour of sanctity which enlivened the neighbourhood of this holy man was well-nigh intolerable. He was remarkable among others of his order from the circumstance that, in place of subduing his fleshly longings by inflicting upon himself some distortion of the limbs, as most of them use to do, he chose to go burdened with a prodigious great mass of iron chains, which were attached at one end to an iron collar around his neck, and at the other to two rings upon his ankles. I am persuaded that the weight of these singular kind of trinkets could not have been less than that of a well-grown man. I satisfied myself that only by cutting through the iron links could the chains be removed, and there is no doubt that for many years he had supported the burden by day and night. The further to demonstrate his sanctity, he had become a practitioner of the discipline of the spiked bed; that is to say, he would recline for a couple of hours at a time upon a couch made of planks, in which a great number of spikes had been driven, with their points uppermost; and he endured this penance without having any kind of clothing or other protection between his skin and the nails.

He had brought with him two fellows who were

his disciples, whose principal function, so far as I could discover, was to see to it that he did not shirk any of his austerities, and to vouch to the common people that the extraordinary discomforts which he inflicted upon himself, and which induced the spectators to contribute to his support, were not feigned. I was not very pleased to observe the presence of these gentry, for I did not desire that the transaction I hoped to effect should take place before witnesses; and I therefore directed Nathoo to carry them to the far end of the island, and there remain with them, taking particular care to see that they did not approach within hearing. The sage offered no objection to my action; indeed, he feigned to be completely insensible to what went on around him; and he squatted upon the ground, looking straight before him with such a fixed and glassy stare as made me think of those hideous idols that the Indous worship.

So long did he maintain this pretension that I found some difficulty in communicating with him. He would not answer me, nor would he suffer it to appear that he had heard me. However, from the very fact that he had obeyed my summons, I felt certain that he would be ready to strike a bargain; and presently I hit upon a way of arousing him from his stupor.

"I have sent for you, O Saddhu," I said, "in order that you may instruct me in the mysteries of saintship."

He now turned his eyes upon me for the first time. "I have already two disciples," he said indifferently.

"So I have observed," I answered, "but that is not precisely what I want. What I desire is that you should instruct me in the commonest observances of your order."

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As he would not be at the trouble of answering me, I continued, after a short pause. "I do not wish to remind you that I was once able to be of some service to you, but rather to inform you that if you should agree to do what I wish, I am in a position to confer a more substantial benefit upon you; in fact, I am willing to pay generously for what I want."

The holy man smiled. He picked up a handful of sand, and allowed it to trickle through his fingers. "Dust and gold," he said; "what is the difference? Both are illusions."

Nevertheless, in spite of his affected indifference, I believed that I could see a sparkle of avarice in his eyes, and this encouraged me to proceed. "Listen, Saddhu," I said, "while I inform you of my desires. Perhaps I may then find means to persuade you. In the first place, I wish you to supply me with a spiked bed, such as that on which you are accustomed to lie; and a set of those admirable trinkets which depend from your neck. Having obtained these, I wish to receive such instructions in the customs of your order, and the duties and manners of disciples, as will enable me to assume such a character without fear of discovery."

The philosopher had resumed his torpid air while I was speaking, and made no reply to me. But I did not allow myself to be disturbed on this account, for I believed that he had no other object than to raise the value of what I wished to get from him.

After a few moments I added, "O Saddhu, is there nothing you desire? I am very wealthy, and have gold and jewels——"

He made the mistake of allowing his cupidity to overcome his religious abstraction, and he turned to me with the greatest eagerness.

“ I wish for a diamond,” he said greedily.

The next moment he appeared to think that he had perhaps shown too much liveliness, and he added with a lofty air, “ Do not be deceived. Neither gold nor jewels have the least value in my eyes. But I have now obtained all the merit which can be gained from the kind of austerities which I have practised for so long ; and I desire to attain to that higher state of abstraction, which can only be reached in perfection by prolonged contemplation of a diamond or some other brilliant object. A diamond is the best ; and it should not be of smaller size than one worth a thousand rupees.”

I could hardly restrain my laughter at his simplicity in supposing that I did not perceive his cupidity ; but I understood that if I should be so rash as to show my merriment he might take offence, and I maintained an air of gravity as I listened to his demand. “ I have some stones of the size you desire,” I said, “ and I shall esteem it a privilege if I can assist you in your progress along the way of holiness by striking a bargain with you. But in the first place, it will be necessary for you to maintain absolute silence, not only as to our transaction, but also concerning my presence in this place. Indeed, if anyone should discover that I am here, nothing is more certain than that you will never obtain the diamond.”

After a good deal of chaffering, I managed to make an arrangement with him. He was to bring the bed and the chains on the following evening, as soon as it should be dark, and he was then to remain with me the whole night, instructing me in such knowledge as I required to enable me to carry out my plans.

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Finally, he was to leave me just before dawn, and not until then would he receive the diamond. He further undertook that he and his disciples would preserve the most scrupulous silence; and on this point I was obliged to trust him, which I did with the less unwillingness because I knew that, save in the performance of their austerities, these saints have no commerce with the world, but affect to be indifferent to, and even unconscious of, what takes place before their eyes. When at last all the details of our bargain had been arranged, the sage rose to take his leave with his disciples, and I watched their departure with entire satisfaction, for our bargaining had lasted a long time, and there was more to be done before morning. Moreover, my readiness to bid the philosopher farewell was augmented by that intolerable odour of sanctity which I have already mentioned.

As soon as Nathoo had set them across the stream, and had returned, I called him to me, and began to instruct him as to what I would have him do. But the fellow was disturbed in his mind, and paid slight heed to my words; and before I had gone very far he interrupted me, with that new freedom of manner which had begun to be apparent in him.

“ Master,” he said, exhibiting in his voice and expression some marks of uneasiness, “ I beseech you, tell me what it is you propose to do. Why have you exposed the secret of our hiding-place to the Saddhu, who, I am persuaded, is a rascal, and will betray us? I foresee that some terrible disaster will befall us; and this time it will not be possible for us to escape.”

Although his presumption in venturing to question me affected me very disagreeably, I did not allow myself to give vent to my annoyance; for I had none but him in all Indoustan whom I could rely on, and I understood the folly of quarrelling with him. I rather sought to convince his reason, and to persuade him that he would be wise to leave his safety in my hands. "What!" I exclaimed, "have you seen so many proofs of my address, and do you yet permit yourself to doubt my wisdom? Have you forgotten that during the whole of my residence in this country I have never failed in anything I have undertaken? True, a calamity has befallen me; but you are not to suppose that I have lost that skill in affairs which I formerly possessed. I perceive that you have forgotten that you are still my servant; and lest my plans should be thwarted in the future by your unwillingness to obey me, I shall now make you a proposal. Either you shall undertake to render me instant and unquestioning obedience in whatsoever I require, as heretofore; and rely upon me to preserve you, as well as myself from the pursuit and assaults of our foes; or, if you refuse to do this, I shall now dismiss you at once from my service, and will make my way out of this country alone. I do not forget that you have rendered me faithful service in the past, and particularly that I owe my freedom to you, and I shall therefore, if you prefer to leave me, make you a considerable present, such as will enable you to subsist in comfort for the rest of your days. You are free to choose; and I desire that you inform me at once of your decision."

Thereupon the poor creature fell upon his knees,

and with the greatest earnestness protested his entire devotion to me, and his complete confidence in my protection. He excused himself with the utmost humility for his presumption, and implored my pardon with tears streaming from his eyes; and his appearance and manner spoke so eloquently of his affection and loyalty, that I was reassured. But I took advantage of this occasion to impress him with the necessity of unquestioning obedience; and I pointed out to him the wickedness of which he would be guilty if he should allow my misfortune to inspire him with a spirit of rebellion. After I had sufficiently harangued him, I informed him of what I would have him do. I revealed to him the situation in which I had concealed my wealth; and the night being now far advanced, I directed him to proceed with the greatest expedition to this place, and to dig up, and bring to me, my precious casket. "When you have done this," I added, "and returned to me in safety, I shall inform you of my plans, and explain my action with regard to the Saddhu."

Such good effect had my warning exercised upon him that he started at once, without venturing to say a word, though I could see that he was full of curiosity. When he had gone, I laid myself down to obtain some rest, of which I felt greatly in need; but before long I was aroused by a circumstance which, although it occasioned me some alarm, yet in the end turned out so much to my advantage, and gave me such substantial help in the forwarding of my plans, that I became convinced that Providence had not forgotten me, but was rather watching over my fortunes; for it was just in that

part of my plans which I knew not how to accomplish that chance came to my assistance.

As I have said, I lay down to rest ; and instantly fell asleep, being wearied beyond measure by what I had undergone. Indeed, so deep was the slumber into which I passed, that when I was suddenly awakened, I scarce knew that I had been sleeping, but thought rather that I had only just lain down. Yet I had been unconscious for upwards of two hours.

I knew not what had aroused me, but feeling full of uneasiness, I sat up and listened. For several minutes I heard nothing unusual ; there was no other sound than the confused murmur of the river slipping smoothly past my island, the sighing of a faint breeze, and the rustling of the rushes. Nevertheless, I felt certain that some other sound had just died away, and I waited in the most painful suspense to hear it repeated. I was beginning to fancy at last that I was mistaken, and that it was but the recollection of an evil dream that had alarmed me ; but as I strained my hearing, there came a sudden crashing among the reeds that set my heart leaping. Then there was another movement, and following it a muttered word of warning. Then silence again.

Here was just such an emergency as called for the exercise of that ready wit which had so constantly preserved me. Though my brain was not yet freed of the clouds of slumber, I instantly comprehended the situation. My retreat, I knew, had been discovered ; there was more than one man on the islet ; but as yet they had not lighted on the clearing, and they still hoped to take me sleeping.

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There was no time to lose, and without hesitation I rose, and slipped noiselessly among the rushes, remaining concealed there within a pace or two of the clearing.

My purpose was to watch, and ascertain how many men there might be, and whether resistance might avail; my hope was that finding my hiding-place vacant they might suppose I was fled, and seek me elsewhere. Fortune decreed that the event should be more favourable than either of these.

I had no sooner concealed myself than three men broke into the clearing on the far side, followed an instant later by a fourth, in whom I recognised, with the greatest alarm, my enemy Fazal Khan. When I saw him I knew that the danger was greater than I had supposed; his emissaries would have been content with a careless search, but he would leave no spot on the islet unbeaten.

Their eyes fell at once upon my shelter, and they turned to the hakim for orders. Then they began to approach the shelter gingerly, Fazal Khan remaining in the rear; and I almost laughed aloud to see them, their caution in approaching my empty lair was so extreme. Each instant, I perceived, they feared that their prey might rush out upon them. And when at last they found the place was empty, their disappointment was no less ludicrous than their relief.

But the hakim was too wily to be deceived. It was apparent that he instantly guessed what had happened, for he abandoned all secrecy, and spoke aloud to his fellows. "He is still on the island," he exclaimed; "he cannot have escaped, for as we

know, his servant crossed the stream alone, and has left the boat on the far side. Search the island carefully therefore; you will certainly discover him, or, if you do not, we will fire the rushes and burn him out."

The three men plunged again into the thicket, moving this time without caution, and making a great crashing of the dry rushes. The hakim remained standing in the clearing, believing perhaps that he was safe there from a sudden attack. He was so close to me that I could have touched him with my outstretched hand, and by a piece of good fortune his back was turned towards me. I instantly made up my mind what to do. I quietly unwound some feet of my turban, and held this in my left hand. Then, waiting until the noise they made informed me that the searchers had gone to some little distance, I took advantage of a momentary increase in the crashing of the dry rushes, and sprang suddenly upon my enemy, thrusting the loose end of my turban into his mouth so as to prevent his crying out, and bearing him to the earth. My attack was so sudden that he was down before he knew what was happening. I fell on the top of him, and the shock must have driven the breath out of his body. I was far heavier than he, and younger by thirty years, and though he struggled furiously as I lay upon him, he could not escape from my grip. But though I could hold him there, that would not ensure my safety; I must get him hidden. I therefore dragged my body forward so that the weight of my chest lay upon the back of his head, pinning it to the ground; I was thus able to withdraw my left hand, with which I had already thrust

the coils of my turban far into his mouth—at the cost of some savage bites, which I did not heed. I had both hands free now, and seizing his neck in my left to prevent him from raising his head, I struck him repeatedly with the knuckles of my right on the soft part of the skull behind the ear. He fought desperately, tearing at my body with his hands; but as he lay upon his face, he could not injure me, for he had to strike behind him. Half a dozen blows were enough; I felt his body suddenly grow limp under me, and knew that for some time at least he would remain unconscious.

I suppose all this had not taken more than three minutes to accomplish. I now raised my head and listened; the men were still trampling down the dry rushes, and it was evident that the noise they were making had prevented them from hearing anything of the struggle. I now cautiously dragged the body of the hakim into the jungle, at the spot where the three men had begun their search, rightly judging that they would not beat over this part again. Having got into a place of concealment, I unwound my turban, and tearing it into short lengths, I gagged and bound my unconscious foe so securely with them that even if he should become conscious again he would be unable to move or cry out. That done, I sat down and waited.

I ever look back upon that night as the most wonderful of my life, and the occasion when the favour of that Providence which has so often protected me was most strikingly manifested. For my enemy having been thus delivered into my hands, I might very well have supposed that I could not look for any further assistance. And indeed, I began to feel

a little uneasy, and to fear that my action had perhaps been too rash, for I could not imagine how I should escape the three men, if they should prosecute their search with vigour. Their suspicions would certainly be aroused when they missed the hakim, and it would have gone hard with me if Providence had not once more interfered in my favour, and struck terror into the hearts of my foes.

While I lay in doubt as to what I ought to do, I heard the men returning, and in a few minutes they stepped into the clearing. They were so close to me that I could hear what they said with the greatest ease.

"It is evident," said one, in a low voice, "that he is not here, and for my part I rejoice. It would certainly have gone ill with any of us if we had come suddenly upon him among the rushes, for he is a dangerous man; and, moreover, it is commonly said that he has the assistance of some demon."

"That is true," said another; "and as for me, although it is well known that I do not fear any man, yet I do not wish to oppose the Jinn. This is an evil spot, by Allah, and it were well that we should quit it. Where is the hakim?"

After they had waited some little time, they began to grow uneasy, hearing no sign of their master. "Let us call him, brothers," said one of them; "he cannot be far away."

They did so, raising their voices, and calling, "O hakim-ji! O Fazal Khan! O Fazal!" When they got no answer they became excessively troubled, and after they had called many times in vain, I could see by their faces that panic was tak-

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ing possession of them. "O Abdul," said the one who had spoken first, "your words were true when you said that this was an evil spot. Of a certainty some dreadful catastrophe has overtaken our Master, for the island is so small that he could not fail to hear us if he were on it, and alive. What can have happened?"

"Perehance he has wandered too near the shore, and has been seized by one of those crocodiles which slid into the water as our boat approached the island," said Abdul. "Or it may be that the Cárar Sahib has instructed his demons to carry him off. Indeed, I believe that I heard a rushing sound in the air a little while back. Doubtless 'twas the passage of the demon, bearing the hakim in his arms."

"Nay," said the third man who had not yet spoken, "'twas the spirit of thy father's wife, who has come abroad to protect her son, lest he should be frightened by childish fables. For my part, I know very well what has happened. The Cárar Sahib is on the island, and hath fallen upon him quietly, and slain him. We should search again till we find him."

"Nay," said the man Abdul in a whisper, which, however, did not prevent my hearing what he said. "It may be as thou sayest, but it would be folly to search, for he might very easily slay us one by one. For my part," he added, raising his voice with the intention of allowing me to hear what he said, "I bear no ill-will against the Cárar Sahib, and, indeed, I am very well content to let him escape. If, as thou sayest, the hakim is slain, well and good; the quarrel was between those two, and the Cárar

Sahib is the victor. We have no concern in the matter. Let us go home, and trouble ourselves no further."

"But what are we to say? Shall we not be accused of having slain the hakim if we return without him?"

"Why," said Abdul, "the best we can do is to go each man to his home, and remain there quietly for two or three days. Then, if the hakim does not reappear, we shall know that he is really dead; and if we are questioned we shall say that a crocodile seized him."

In short, as I lay there chuckling at their folly and cowardice, they agreed to adopt this plan; and they moved off, keeping together like frightened children in the dark, and casting fearful glances over their shoulders. The spirit of mischief overcame me, and when they were half-way to the shore, I uttered the most melancholy and terrifying howl I could contrive. This had the effect I desired; they took to their heels, and rushed helter-skelter through the grasses, tumbled into their boat, and pushed off in a frenzy of terror. I burst into a hearty fit of laughter when they were gone, and lay for a long time shaking my sides with merriment. However, I grew sober again presently, and when I came to think over what had occurred, I could not sufficiently marvel at my good fortune. Indeed, if they had desired to forward my plans in every way, they could have done no more than they did.

CHAPTER XII.

I ADOPT A STRANGE DISGUISE, AND SET FORTH UPON AN ADVENTUROUS JOURNEY. A DISAGREEABLE NECESSITY.

It was close upon dawn when my good Nathoo returned, having successfully accomplished his errand, and brought with him my precious casket. I met him as the boat touched the shore—keeping, you may be certain, a sharp look-out for crocodiles—and highly commended his diligence and obedience. I said nothing of what had occurred during his absence, being willing to divert myself with his astonishment; and after I had helped him to conceal the boat, we walked together to the clearing.

I watched him as his eyes fell upon our enemy lying bound upon the sand; and I could hardly restrain my laughter at the sight of his perplexity. He looked at me and the hakim; his mouth opened, and I saw that he was about to pour forth a torrent of inquiries. But before he spoke he suddenly recollected our bargain, and his undertaking that he would not presume to question anything I might see fit to do; and he checked himself, looking so confounded that I was obliged to relieve myself of a hearty fit of laughter. “O Nathoo,” I exclaimed, shaking my sides, “you perceive that I have not been idle during your absence.”

When I had sufficiently laughed at him, I informed him of what had taken place; and I had the satisfaction of perceiving that his confidence in me was greatly increased by this extraordinary proof of my address. “O master,” he cried, after I had

finished, "truly I had rather entrust my life to your care, though you were alone and unarmed, than to a regiment of the Emperor's troops. For I am persuaded that neither our enemies, nor the gods themselves, may hope to prevail against you."

I commended his good sense, and assured him that he could not do better than trust in me; and then, still disregarding the hakim, who watched us with venomous eyes, silent because of the gag that was in his mouth, I continued, "You will recollect that I promised to unfold my plans to you when you should have carried out my errand. Listen then, and I shall inform you of what I intend."

He signified his attention, and I proceeded as follows: "It will be evident to you that as we have secured this rascal, the pursuit will have lost its vigour, since no one can be as desirous of securing me as he was. Nevertheless, we must not show ourselves in this neighbourhood, for the news of my imprisonment and escape will certainly have spread, and should any man chance to recognise me, he will surely send word to Agra, and we shall be recaptured. To avoid this, I intend therefore to travel three or four days' journey down the river in our boat, going only by night, and lying concealed all day. That will take us beyond the district where I am known; we shall then leave the river, and assuming the disguise of two disciples of a holy man, make our way across the country, in the direction of the port where we shall take ship for Europe."

Nathoo asked permission to put a question to me; and when I granted it, he inquired who might the Saddhu be to whom we should attach ourselves.

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“For I greatly fear,” he said, “that it will be difficult to discover one who has not already some disciples, or who would be willing to go with us.”

“You may be perfectly easy on that score,” I replied, “for I have already secured a holy man; and as for his consent, that will not be necessary. In short, not to bewilder you,” I added, waving my hand towards the prostrate Fazal Khan, “I intend to make this good Mussalman a convert to your religion. In the guise of a Saddhu he will accompany us; by the austerities he will undergo, he shall induce the populace to contribute to our support, and shall earn himself a reputation for sanctity; and that we should not be liable to reproach for not performing our share, we shall take good care to be the most assiduous, watchful, and attentive disciples that any philosopher ever had. Indeed, night and day the holy man shall never be left unattended, for I am resolved that he shall not be tempted to leave us through annoyance at any laxity on our part.”

After pausing to enjoy the astonishment on Nathoo's face, and the mixture of fury and consternation on that of the hakim, I continued: “You will recollect that I arranged with that Saddhu who was here with us during the earlier part of the night, that he should bring me a set of chains and a spiked bed. These chains we shall attach to the neck of our convert, and the weight of them is such that even if he should be tempted to take his leave of us, he will not be able to go very far. As for the spike bed, that, no doubt, may form an uncomfortable resting-place at first; but use accustoms us to most things; and as I anticipate that our journey under these circum-

stances will be slow, there will be plenty of time for our philosopher's skin to harden. I will not deny that I regret the need for putting the good hakim to such discomfort; but necessity knows no law, and I am partly consoled by the recollection of a certain speech which he made not so long ago, in which mention was made of flaying, boiling alive, and so forth. If the excellent Fazal Khan, whose tenderness of heart is notorious, was ready to resort to such measures as those, where he judged them to be necessary, I need not shrink from what I propose to do."

I then turned to Fazal Khan. "Listen, hakim-ji," I said, "you have heard what I intend to do, and you will be well advised to play your part carefully. Indeed, your fate will depend upon the manner in which you do this; for if you submit quietly, I shall release you when we reach Surat, where you can no longer do me any harm. But if you should attempt any treachery, or be so foolish as to make any move towards communicating with the people of the country with a view to betraying us, I shall certainly slay you. Moreover, the extent of the discomforts you are to suffer will depend upon yourself; for if you play the part of a Saddhu well, your periods of repose on that bed of little ease shall be as short as I can reasonably make them; but if you should permit your annoyance to lead you into the folly of trying to thwart me, you shall lie there the longer."

He could not reply, on account of the gag in his mouth. He stared at me with his black, venomous eyes, and no words of his were needed to assure me of his malicious disposition towards myself. I

understood very well that I should have trouble with him; the expression of his eyes showed nothing of fear, or of acquiescence in my words; nothing, indeed, but the most implacable hatred. Indeed, his look exhibited so much defiant courage that I could not withhold some admiration for his constancy; but at the same time, I understood that I should be obliged to use the most relentless severity in order to force him to comply with my wishes, and I determined to do without hesitation whatever might be necessary. I recalled his frightful cruelty to the Lady Kishna; and I resolved that I would not be dissuaded from pursuing my intentions by any of those amiable shrinkings to which my merciful disposition inclined me.

I passed the rest of that day in reposing, and drilling Nathoo in the part he was to play. After nightfall the Saddhu came, as had been arranged, bringing with him the bed and the chains, which had been removed from his own neck. I had stipulated also that he should be provided with tools, wherewith I could so rivet the iron collar round the hakim's neck, and the rings upon his ankles, as to make it impossible for him to get rid of the chains without the aid of a blacksmith. My first care was thus to invest my enemy with the trinkets I had provided for him; and desiring the Saddhu to assist me in this, I had another surprise, for no sooner did the sage's glance fall upon Fazal Khan, than he broke out into the most bitter revilings. "O accursed!" he cried, "are you at last humbled into the dust? Almost could I bless these chains, which for so many years I have secretly cursed, when I think that they are to inflict upon your dog's

carcase all the weariness and misery I have endured for so long ! ” And with that he struck the hakim in the ribs with his foot, and would have proceeded to maltreat him further as he lay helpless upon the ground, but that I interposed. I knew not what the quarrel was between these two ; but it was a most fortunate circumstance for me, for the Saddhu was little likely to betray me, knowing that if he did so he would cause the release of that enemy whom he so detested.

Never was such a transformation witnessed as that which we effected in the hakim. After fastening the chains upon him, we stripped him, allowing him no other clothing than a piece of rag around his loins. We entangled his hair and beard, and rubbed sand and ashes into them, and upon his skin ; and when we had finished with him he presented as fine a picture of a Saddhu as could have been wished. I then withdrew with the real Saddhu out of hearing, for I had no wish to give my enemy any opportunity of thwarting my plans, and desired that he would instruct me as to the customs of his order.

I found that this was a simpler matter than I had supposed ; indeed, there was no other character we could have so easily assumed as the one I had chosen, for this reason : the Saddhus are exempt from most of the ceremonial observances of the Gentiles, and the wilder and more extraordinary their conduct, the greater do the common people suppose their sanctity to be. The ordinary Indou, or Mussalman, is bound by rigid observances in the most trifling circumstances of life, and had we assumed the disguise of one of these, we should infallibly have been discovered. But in no way

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can the holy man better show his eminence than by the eccentricity of his conduct, and by his constant disregard of customary rules; hence there was little fear that we should betray ourselves through lack of knowledge.

When at last I dismissed the Saddhu with the diamond I had promised him, there were yet some hours of darkness remaining, and although I had not intended to begin my journey until the following night, yet I conceived that every mile which I could put between myself and my enemies would increase my safety, and I therefore resolved to start at once. We had no other preparations to make than to put upon our vessel the bed of spikes and such food as we had with us. This was quickly done, yet not without some danger; for as I stooped to raise the bed, Nathoo being at the other end of it, a sudden shadow fell upon the ground beside me, and that Providence which has ever watched over me putting a suspicion into my heart, I stepped aside quickly, turning round as I did so. Not an instant too soon, for I perceived that false and treacherous hakim, whom I had supposed to be lying on the ground, standing just behind the place where I had been, having somehow erected himself in spite of his bonds, and with his manacled arms upraised, in the act of delivering a ferocious blow at my head with his heavy chains. I had certainly been stunned, and perhaps killed, if I had not noticed his shadow; indeed, so narrow was my escape that he could not check the blow, and being overbalanced by the weight of his chains, he pitched forward upon the spiky bed. The great mass of chains with which he was decorated pro-

tected his body to some extent ; yet he did not escape some prickings ; and in those places where the chains saved him from this, he was severely bruised by the iron links, thus justly receiving, as a consequence of his own action, a fit punishment for the treachery he had designed against me.

I wasted no time in upbraiding him ; for if we do not look for figs on a thorn tree, neither do we expect from the false and treacherous that nice and punctilious behaviour which is the peculiar merit of a man of honour. Bidding Nathoo take his feet, I grasped him by the head, and together we raised him and flung him into the boat with very little ceremony, where he lay, stunned by the shock of his fall, and humiliated by the failure of his dastardly attempt. This done, we placed his bed on the boat, and, jumping in ourselves, we pushed off, and started on our adventurous journey.

Now that I was at last setting forth from the neighbourhood of the Imperial city, wherein I had enjoyed the most lavish favours of fortune and fathomed the depths of misery, where I had accomplished so much and suffered so cruelly, I could not but experience some feelings of regret at the thought that never again should I set eyes upon that strange Eastern city. 'Twas but little more than a year since I had arrived there, poor and unknown, with no other assistance in the making of my fortune than those qualities with which nature has provided me : a courageous spirit, an unsurpassed readiness of wit and resource, and an invincible determination to turn to my advantage every variation of fortune, however unpropitious it might appear. Thus endowed, but lacking wealth, influ-

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ence and friends, I had risen, solely by my own merits, to such a pinnaele of splendour as I suppose was never before attained by any gentleman in the like ease. And now, after all my triumphs, I was flying from that spot, in the most imminent peril of my life, not venturing to show my face by daylight, but lying up in desolate brakes like a wild beast: a vietim, not to any fault of my own, but to the malice and treachery of evil men. Truly, I reflected, my history contains a valuable lesson to such as would learn wisdom. The false, self-seeking spirit of the world was aptly demonstrated in this, that not all my power, splendour, and riches, had proeured me one friend, though countless sycophants had bowed before me. With but one humble well-wisher I had arrived at the Court, with that same one I left it. Yet, as though to prove that virtue cannot go unrewarded, Providence had secured to me two things, despite my misfortunes; namely, the precious conseiousness of the fame which I had aequired, and what I valued less, though I was not so foolish as to despise it, a great fortune, which it had been my principal objet to aequire.

Such were my reflections as we slipped down the dark stream; and presently there arose before my eyes a seene which afflicted me with the most poignant anguish, for as we drifted on we eame to a spot where the low banks fell away suddenly. Gazing idly through this gap over the dark country, my glance fell upon the shadowy outline of a clump of trees, which stood out against the sky at a great distance. Well I knew what trees those were; they were those which grew in Kishna's garden, which by far out-topped any in the neighbourhood; and as

I recognised them there came rushing into my mind, irresistible as a deluge, all those bitter yet tender memories which I had vainly endeavoured to stifle. My anguish was excessive, and I relieved myself of a copious flood of tears. "Alack!" I cried, "what profit is there to be got of all my wealth and fame? Sure, I would barter them all—ay, and life itself—could I thereby obtain the bliss of one hour in that deserted garden with my lovely Kishna."

Every joy or sorrow I had experienced seemed to me now as nothing, beside the bitter necessity of leaving for ever, without so much as a farewell visit, that enchanted garden in the wilderness, within whose walls I had passed so many hours of happiness such as, I knew well, I could not hope ever again to experience. My grief became so exquisite, and my mind became filled with such an indescribable confusion of sweet and bitter emotions, that I was fain to fling myself down upon my face on the deck; and in this position I remained for a long time, insensible to what was passing around me.

But the more violent the emotions from which we suffer, the more quickly do they wear themselves out. After a while I found myself becoming more tranquil, and my recovery was materially assisted by the reflection which now occurred to me, that I was at last, after so many weary months, in a position to put into execution that vow which I had taken, of inflicting upon the hakim the vengeance which his atrocious crime had merited. As this thought occurred to me, I raised myself from my prone position, and regarded my enemy, endeavouring to discover in his countenance some evidence of that treacherous nature which I had but too much reason

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to know that he possessed. But truth to tell, his appearance gave no sign of the fathomless infamy of his soul; his countenance was indeed rather venerable than otherwise, for, as is common among the Moguls, he had well-shaped and delicate features, and a noble expression. Alas! what evil may lie hid behind fair-seeming appearances.

We had by now drifted down to a part of the river where, as I knew, no villages stood upon the banks, for the country round was bleak and desolate. I therefore conceived that I might now safely relieve the hakim of the gag in his mouth, which I did accordingly, leaving him, however, still bound hand and foot. I then proceeded to deliver to him some admonitions, moved, as I must confess, in no small degree by the hatred I nourished for him, and willing to relieve my own anguish by taunting him with his fallen condition.

"You are now," I said, "completely in my power, as, not so long ago, I was in yours. It cannot be necessary for me to remind you that your present miserable situation is no more than the natural result of your villainy. I do not suppose you to be so foolish as to have lived these many years without observing that evil actions never, in the long run, profit those who are guilty of them. You will therefore readily admit that you have no cause to complain, either in what has already befallen you, or in the penance which, as you will have gathered from my conversation with my man, I propose to inflict upon you. I fear that of one so old in villainy, it is useless to hope that he will so far profit by his punishment as to seek to amend his ways; yet if you will do so, I assure you that you

may still hope that in the future you may become worthy of the respect of honourable men. I conjure you to lay these words to heart, and consider them well; and it is possible that you may some day feel gratitude to me for my rigorous treatment of you."

But, alas! so hardened in villainy, so sunk in the lowest depths of depravity was this wicked old man, that he disregarded my wholesome advice, and without deigning to return me any answer, he spat upon the deck of the boat, in order to show his contempt for me. Truly, I had expected nothing better of him, and yet his stubbornness grieved me. I now abandoned every effort to bring him to repentance, and assuming a harsher demeanour, addressed him as follows :

"Continue then, if you will, in your evil ways; I have nothing further to say on that subject. But do not be under any misapprehension as to my intentions towards you. I intend that you shall play the part of a Saddhu, and thus protect one whom you have tried to injure from the dangers which might arise through the curiosity of the people whom we shall meet. You will have to perform austerities, which you may perhaps find unpleasant; but nothing that I can inflict upon you will equal the rigorous punishment which your treacheries have merited. I have already warned you not to attempt to betray us; and if you are wise, you will refrain from any tricks of that kind, for although I would not slay you in cold blood, as a punishment for your past offences, I shall certainly do so if you endanger my safety in any way."

He affected to laugh, but his merriment had a

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kind of snarling sound in it which betrayed the fury in his heart. "You have conceived a very pretty plan, Cárar Sahib!" he said with a sneer; "and perhaps it might be completely successful, but for one thing which you have forgotten. You cannot maintain for a moment the character you have chosen to assume, unless I choose to support you. That I am not inclined to do; indeed, I refuse absolutely. I will undergo none of the austerities you propose; neither by my demeanour nor by my actions will I do anything to support the deception which you desire to practise; and since the least sign of unwillingness on my part will arouse suspicion against you, it will be evident to you that your plan cannot be carried out."

"Do not be deceived," I replied. "You are here completely in my power, and I can do whatever I please with you. There is only one thing that stands between you and your death: the possibility that you may be useful to me. If you remain obdurate, and refuse to submit to my will, you will become a danger to me, and I have already warned you what the result of that will be. And if this reflection is not sufficient to overcome your resistance, I have other means of persuading you, which I shall not hesitate to employ."

He burst out into a clamour of wild words, feeling himself completely in my power, and driven into a frenzy by the knowledge. He swore that he would die rather than do as I wished, and that nothing I could devise would have the least effect upon his determination. He called down the most frightful curses upon my head, and allowed his fury to obtain such complete control over him that the foam lay upon

his beard, and I thought that he was like to become demented. I could not contemplate without disgust the spectacle of this grave and reverend man, with his venerable long beard, and his handsome face, so given over to evil passions as to be unable to control his words or actions. I judged that it was now a fitting time to prove to him, that if he should resist me never so stubbornly, he could not hope to overcome my resolution, and with this intention I put into execution a plan I had previously formed.

With Nathoo's assistance I laid him, still bound, upon the Saddhu's spiked bed, and tied him on it so that he could not move. I then sat down beside him, assuring him that he might procure his release from that uncomfortable situation as soon as he pleased, by swearing to me, by the beard of the Prophet Mohammed, that he would faithfully support me, and abstain from any treacherous action. I had supposed that after reclining for a short time upon the bed of spikes, he might perceive the wisdom of yielding; but when, after an hour, he still obstinately refused, and would give no other answer than a torrent of curses to my questions, I considered that it was necessary to use stronger methods of persuasion.

Every gentleman who has lived in the world of action, and has been under the necessity of relying for his safety upon his wit and courage, is very well aware that at times fortune is so unkind as to require of him, if he would not perish, that he should pursue some course of action which may be distasteful to him. A wise man will not hesitate at such times; he will submit to necessity, and do whatever appears to be advisable, even at the cost of some self-

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reproaches. Thus in the history of all men who have sustained adventures, there are certain passages which they would not willingly relate; although their own consciences may absolve them from blame, yet discretion teaches them to conceal these matters, lest they should give to the ill-disposed an opportunity of injuring them. As with others, so it has been with me; I have not been able to escape the necessity of doing some actions which I prefer not to speak about, and this was never more necessary than in the present case.

I shall therefore say nothing more of what now took place, than that I was obliged to use the most rigorous compulsion to overcome the resistance of the hakim. Such is the natural gentleness of my disposition that I might have refused to torture him, even though I knew that my life depended on it, if I had had only myself to consider. But while I hesitated, my eye fell upon Nathoo. "What!" I exclaimed to myself, "will you abandon this poor faithful wretch who has put his trust in you? Will you selfishly indulge those tender feelings of compassion which are natural to you, when you know that by doing so you will endanger the life which has been entrusted to your care? You have no right to do so. Every consideration of honour and duty require that you should proceed without flinching in what you have to perform. Do without hesitation what is necessary, and you will obtain the reward of a quiet conscience, which you know well how to value."

These reflections convinced me, and I set to work with a will, Nathoo assisting me, and showing a readiness in doing so that I found more useful than

agreeable. I cannot, even now, recall without disgust the scene which took place in the darkness, as we floated down the hurrying stream. Enough to say that an hour later the hakim was released from his bed of spikes, having just gasped out his promise to do my will, and to support me honourably; a promise which I obliged him to fortify with the most solemn oaths which a Mussalman can swear. Solemn though they were, I did not suppose that he would keep them if he should see any opportunity of betraying me with impunity. But I had at least some hope that the threefold safeguard of the oaths he had sworn, the fear of death if he should violate them, and on my part, unceasing watchfulness, would at least give me some chance of carrying through my perilous and difficult plan.

A faint lightening in the East now warned me that it was time I should be looking for a hiding-place, in which to lie up during the day; and very opportunely I espied a great reed-bed, which seemed to offer security, at least against the assaults of men, though I judged we might probably find that it was a harbourage of some wild beasts. But this was a peril which I must now look to encounter daily, and I therefore ordered Nathoo to direct our course toward that spot, and in a few minutes we had landed. After drawing up the boat, and concealing it from curious eyes, we penetrated into the recesses of this brake; and as I had anticipated, a loud crashing as we advanced warned us that some wild creatures had made it their home. But I could not discover any other tracks than those of wild boars, which are not dangerous to a man who will abstain from persecuting them; they dashed away in terror at our approach, and we were able to set

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about clearing a space to rest in with confidence that we were in no danger of immediate attack.

In this secure though uncomfortable refuge we passed the whole of that day. Having been for so long accustomed to live nicely at the Court, I suffered the greatest discomfort from the burning heat of the sun; and although my faithful Nathoo, ever solicitous in furthering his master's welfare, made shift to construct for me a rude shelter of dry rushes, it was but a poor protection against the insufferable ardour of that luminary, which in this country has such power as to endanger the very life of those who are exposed to its rays. 'Twas indeed a miserable situation in which I passed that day; tormented by the heat and by countless stinging flies, with nothing but the bare earth to lie upon, no objects to contemplate save a tangle of dry rushes around me, and a brazen sky overhead, and no sounds in my ears but the ceaseless murmuring of the stream, the cries of strange birds, and occasionally the plunging of a crocodile or some other monstrous beast in the river. I was in considerable fear lest one of these horrid creatures should come up into the reed-bed to rest; but Providence directed otherwise, and throughout the whole of that long day we remained undisturbed.

Since we were to travel by night, it was necessary to rest during the day-time, and Nathoo and I took turns in sleeping and keeping watch. As for the hakim, he was in no condition to give me any trouble; and without doubt, the recollection of what he had endured would have dissuaded him, if he had been inclined to do so. All day long he lay motionless, slumbering at times, or brooding over his downfall; and I forbore to disturb his reflections, for I

did not desire to aggravate his sufferings, now that he was brought to so miserable and wretched a condition.

The day passed without adventure, and so soon as it became dark, we put out again upon the stream. We made good progress during the night, and at dawn we found a shelter similar to the one we had used the day before. So we continued for three days; lying up in concealment when it was light, and starting again as soon as the sun disappeared. In spite of the hardships we endured, we were so fortunate as to meet with no untoward accident, and I began to wish that it were possible to follow the stream down to the sea, and to take my chance of finding a vessel there. But I would not run such risks as this plan involved, partly because I was ignorant as to the course of the river, and partly because the stream was shrinking each day, and I foresaw that very soon it would be impossible to journey any further by water. Moreover, on the third day our supply of food gave out, and this made it necessary that I should quit the stream and carry out my original plan. On the fourth morning, therefore, having descried a considerable village at a distance of some miles from the bank, we landed, and having hidden the boat securely, lest it should betray us in the event of our pursuers coming that way, we set out on foot. Nathoo went in front, then the hakim, and I followed at some little distance in order that I might watch every movement of the supposed philosopher, and check any attempt at treachery if he should be so ill-advised as to forget his oath.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HAKIM APPEARS IN THE CHARACTER OF A PHILOSOPHER. WANDERINGS IN THE DESERT. THE HAKIM'S WICKEDNESS.

It was not without some hesitation that I left the comparative safety of the river, to set forth upon my long journey through unknown perils, such as I should certainly have to face. Although we were now at a considerable distance from Agra, in a district where I was unknown to the regular population, yet we had not come so far that I could feel safe from discovery by some officer of the Court whose business might have brought him to these regions. True, I was disguised, and it is not to be supposed that anyone would look to discover, in the humble companion of a peripatetic sage, the brilliant and once all-powerful Cánar Sahib; yet I knew very well that in my gait and general appearance a discerning eye could discover such evidences of nobility as neither the most extraordinary disguise nor the most assiduous care could wholly obliterate. And did I not carry with me, in the person of the suppositious philosopher, a witness who would only too readily confirm any suspicions which the peculiarities of my bearing might arouse? So far as Fazal Khan was concerned, I believed that regard for his own safety would secure me against any attempt at betrayal on his part, so long as no particular opportunity should offer itself; but if the thing I dreaded should come to pass, and I should arouse the suspicions of any Imperial officer, I foresaw that the treacherous hakim would certainly betray me. I therefore decided that I would once

more inform him of my unalterable determination that I would not suffer him to purchase his freedom at the cost of mine ; and I drew up level with him, and addressed him as follows :—

“ O Saddhu ”—for I habitually gave him this title —“ I am now about to exhibit you, at that town which you see ahead of us, as a saint of the most extraordinary renown. I have already instructed you in the part you are to play, and informed you that the duration of the discomforts you have to endure will be determined by the spirit in which you carry out my commands. Before we approach the town, I wish to warn you once again that any treachery on your part will result in your instant death. I shall remain close to you the whole time ; and this knife that you see will not for one moment leave my hand. Should you make even so much as a suspicious movement, I shall instantly plunge it into your bosom, without the slightest regard to what may happen afterwards ; for no disaster which could befall me could outweigh the satisfaction I should feel in having destroyed you. Do not therefore deceive yourself ; even if we should fall in with an officer of the Imperial household, it will profit you nothing to discover yourself to him. No doubt, by doing so, you could destroy me, and this faithful servant of mine, but I believe that you are too wise to desire this at the expense of your own life. I swear to you in the most solemn manner that nothing shall deter me from slaying you if you try to betray me ; and I believe that you have sufficient knowledge of my character, and of the inflexible nature of my resolutions, to require no further assurances from me on this point.”

“ Why,” says he sneering, “ to be sure, I know

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very well the savage and murderous nature of the villain into whose hands I have unhappily fallen, through no fault of my own. Be easy, therefore, as to the safety of that skin upon which you appear to place so high a value; it is quite safe so far as I am concerned. I should indeed merit the contempt of all wise men, if I were to commit the folly of endangering my own life, in order to secure the destruction of so worthless and contemptible a creature. All things are in the hands of Allah; and it is sufficient for me to know that when it pleases him, he will visit you with the due reward of your detestable crimes. I am not concerned to anticipate the fate which is in store for you."

I paid very little heed to these unseemly remarks, for I understood that they proceeded from the natural bitterness of spirit caused by the humiliating position in which he found himself. I need hardly say that there were no grounds whatever for such an opinion as he expressed concerning me; indeed, I do not suppose that he himself believed what he said. I accepted his assurances, not that I had any faith in his word, but because I had a high opinion of his discretion, and believed him to be too wise to disregard my warnings.

As we went on, some of the cultivators in the fields caught sight of us, and came running with uncouth cries and gestures. I had warned the hakim what he was to do; and in obedience to my commands he walked on steadily, paying no attention to the fellows who began to crowd around us. To their inquiries I replied that the Saddhu was one of the most extraordinary saints in Indoustan, and that he performed the most inconceivable austerities. They

asked if he would perform at their town, and I replied that I did not suppose that he would consent to halt at such an inconsiderable place ; adding, however, that if they particularly desired it, I would use my influence with the philosopher, and endeavour to persuade him to oblige them. I then made believe to hold a discussion with him, and at last I informed the worthy fellows that I had prevailed upon the Saddhu to do as they wished ; and I did not forget to add that as a return for such a signal honour, I should expect them to contribute liberally to our support. They readily promised to do so ; and expressed the liveliest satisfaction and gratitude for the holy man's complaisance.

I do not propose to describe our performances at every town and village we came to, for they were very much alike, and I have other matters to relate. I shall therefore give an account of this, our first performance, and shall desire the reader to understand that subsequent displays were of the same kind, or differed only in small details.

When we came up to the village, I cast about for a suitable spot, and decided that a slight eminence on the outskirts would very well answer my purpose, and to this place we proceeded. Having reached it, we sat down in the fashion of the country—an accomplishment which had cost me a good deal of trouble to learn—and the spectators collected around the base of the mound. Recollecting what I had seen of the habits of philosophers, I made no motion to begin the performance for some time ; for I considered that too much haste and assiduity would appear incompatible with our dignity. I therefore remained conversing at my ease with Nathoo, paying no heed to

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the throng of spectators, which was continually increasing. As for the hakim, he had his instructions, and I will do him the justice to admit that he carried them out faithfully. He sat gazing straight in front of him with such an air of abstraction as must have convinced the simple villagers that he was absorbed in the deepest meditation. I have said that he performed his part faithfully; but the word is ill-chosen, for I have no doubt that his principal inducement to do so was the knife in my hand, which I took care to display to him, though I held it in such a fashion as to conceal it from the onlookers.

At length I thought it time to begin, and signified the same to Nathoo. Amid the deep silence among the spectators, who regarded our preparations with the most reverent interest, we erected a kind of wooden tripod we had with us, which the Saddhu had supplied. We then made heaps of dry sticks around the base of the tripod, and that being done, we seized the hakim, and with considerable trouble hoisted him up and passed through his ankle-rings two hooks at the top of the tripod, in such a manner as to suspend him head downwards. We then set alight to the four heaps of sticks, and giving the hakim's body a push, set him swinging over the fires.

The admiration of the beholders at this ridiculous spectacle was excessive; they uttered cries of astonishment at what they considered an act of the greatest holiness, and many of them fell upon their knees, and bowed their heads into the dust. Indeed, at every place we visited, I found that this performance, absurd as it must seem to the polite reader, elicited the utmost admiration from the Indous; for

it is a celebrated performance, but one which is not very often seen, for the Saddhus mostly prefer to show their sanctity by distorting their limbs and by similar practices, which cause them less discomfort when they have become accustomed to them.

I knew very well that the hakim could not endure such austerities as readily as those genuine philosophers whose religious zeal deadens their perception of mere bodily discomfort, and I watched him closely to see how matters stood with him. After perhaps the quarter of an hour I judged that he had had enough of it, and with Nathoo's assistance I released him from his painful situation. A kind of groan went up from the spectators as the performance came to an end, followed by an outburst of admiring cries. This seemed to me a fitting opportunity for gathering our harvest; indeed, many of the spectators began to bring contributions. Altogether we received food enough to last us several days, as well as some trifling coins, which were all these humble admirers could spare.

We did not on this occasion exhibit our Saddhu lying upon his spiked bed; but we afterwards used this spectacle with the greatest effect, and motives of humanity—for I could not bring myself to be merciless even to this depraved man—led me to substitute it as often as possible for the performance I have just described. Indeed, the discomfort caused by this form of penance was trifling; the spikes were not sharp enough to penetrate the skin, and it was possible, with a little care, so to distribute the weight of the body that but little suffering was caused, and that rather on account of the necessary rigidity and avoidance of all movement, than by the

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actual pressure of the spikes. Yet the unthinking multitude regarded this austerity with even greater awe and reverence than that of the tripod and fires.

After we had given our performance, the headman of the village approached me with great humility, and expressed a hope that the saint would remain some days at the village. But this was by no means what I wanted, and I therefore rebuked the fellow, telling him that it was a very great honour that so famous a philosopher should consent to halt at all at this inconsiderable place, and accusing him of presumption in asking for additional favours. This lofty attitude had the effect I desired, and the headman excused himself very humbly for his presumption, and expressed the deepest contrition. I told him that I would overlook his conduct, and I was about to put some questions to him on the subject of our route, when my attention was called to the appearance of the hakim. He was staring before him with such an expression of eagerness as to startle me; his nostrils were quivering, and his strained muscles indicated that he was on the point of springing to his feet.

I followed the direction of his gaze, and perceived with the utmost consternation a Mogul on the outskirts of the crowd. This man was gazing at us with the contempt which the Mohammedans profess for the Gentiles, and I recognised in him one of the inferior officers of the Court, who was noted for his religious zeal and his fanatical temper.

With that instant readiness to act, which, more even than my other qualities, is accountable for my success, I perceived that not a moment was to be lost; the hakim, smarting with the pains he had

just experienced, and burning with rage at his humiliation, was in no mood to appreciate the wisdom of submission, and if my eye had not fallen upon him, he would certainly have betrayed me. I rose at once, and under pretence of performing some necessary service for him, I pressed the point of my knife against his bare back, muttering at the same time, "O Saddhu, beware! No more than the thickness of the fat upon your back stands between you and your death."

He collapsed at once, and his body, which had been quivering and tight-strung, grew limp under my hand. He had courage, it is true, but it was of the kind that enables men to endure sullenly the most dreadful ills, rather than to end them by some sudden and desperate act of daring. I saw that the danger was past; but lest it should recur, lest the smouldering resentment of the hakim should burst out again into sudden flame, I took up my position close to him, and did not leave him until the Mogul moved away, which he did presently, with a high and scornful air, as though he could not condescend long to witness the superstitious practices of the heathen.

We remained at this village during the night, surrounded by a throng of admirers, who never left us for an instant; and in the early morning we resumed our journey, to the great sorrow of the village folk, who escorted us some distance on our way. I now marked a change in the demeanour of the hakim; from our first setting out in the morning there had been observable in him a kind of desperate sullenness, which was quite different from his former air of hopeless composure. He went

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with his head downcast, and I guessed that he was brooding upon what he had undergone. I would not aggravate his annoyance, and refrained from speaking to him, believing that his ill-humour would pass; but when we had marched perhaps two hours it came to a head. He stopped suddenly and faced round to me. As I came up with him he burst out into a furious torrent of abuse, heaping upon me every insulting expression he could find. He was inspired by an intensity of fury such as I never saw in any but an Eastern man; it shook him, his eyes blazed, and then suddenly filled with tears, though of rage rather than grief. I cannot deny that I was moved by the spectacle of this smooth and cautious man, noted in the Court for his subtlety and power of concealing his emotions, thus goaded to such a frenzy as drove him to cast self-control to the winds and to dare the fate I had promised him if he should resist me. He swore that he would go no further, that he would never again play the Saddhu, and declared that I might slay him on the spot if I chose, but I should not persuade him to go any further.

“Why,” says I quietly, “if that is so, there is nothing for it but to put you to death, for I am not minded to release you; and indeed, for my own safety, I dare not do so.” And with that, I drew my knife and advanced upon him resolutely. Up to the very moment that I raised my hand to strike, he braved it out; but just as the blow was about to fall, a kind of quiver ran through him. His eyes changed, the look of desperate bravery passed from them, and gave place to an expression not of fear, but, odd as it may seem, of disappointment. As I live, I believe that his flesh betrayed him, that some

weak bodily shrinking forbade him to find in death that refuge that his spirit was ready to seek. He threw out his hands, and shrank back from me. "Nay," he cried, with a kind of despairing grief in his voice; "nay, I cannot. I yield."

Thus I conquered him. From that moment I had no further difficulty with him. His spirit was broken. I believe that he had worked himself up to this pitch of defiance, conscious perhaps of that fatal weakness of the flesh which would not let him face my knife; and resolute, in this supreme effort, to overcome it, and find in death escape from his punishment. Having failed, his courage could not raise its head again; and he never attempted to resist me, submitting with a kind of dull hopelessness to the penalty I had decreed for him.

Yet although I had conquered him, I got no pleasure from the victory, for I was conscious of a feeling of pity which began to grow in me, a reluctance to oblige him again to submit to such humiliation as he had already endured. Sure, it was strange that I should feel thus, for both expediency and justice required me to persevere; this weakness was the result partly of an inclination to mercy which has ever been noted in my character, and partly of the situation in which I found myself. For I discovered that now that I was deprived of the outward marks of rank, I was less able to maintain that habit of command which I had always exercised unconsciously. The disguise I was obliged to adopt humiliated me, and I who, as a great noble at the Court, had readily used that authority which was my natural right, found that having assumed the appearance of a Saddhu's disciple, or inferior, I

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had also unwittingly assumed something of the feelings proper to that character.

But it must not be supposed that I allowed my conduct to be influenced by such fancies. Not so; I was very well aware that I could make my escape in no other fashion than that which I had chosen, and that my safety, and that of the faithful servant who relied upon me to preserve him, depended upon my obliging the hakim to fulfil his part. But I did so unwillingly, and I was often obliged to call to mind the treachery and wickedness of which he had been guilty, and more especially the dreadful fate which the lovely Kishna had suffered through him, before I could harden my heart sufficiently. These weaknesses grew upon me, and I know not how things would have fallen out if it had not been for an event which I shall presently relate, which took the matter out of my hands. Providence was less merciful than I, and this evil man was not permitted to escape the fate he had merited through those amiable weaknesses for which I believe I shall receive sympathy rather than blame.

This first portion of my great journey across Indoustan was dreary enough. For the most part we avoided neighbourhoods, preferring to travel by unfrequented ways where there were none to spy upon us, and only leaving the solitudes and returning to the haunts of men when our supplies were exhausted and we found it necessary to replenish them by giving a performance and receiving the contributions of the pious and the charitable. Thus, had anyone tried to trace our journey, he would have gained news of us only at places separated by three or four days' march. We would visit a town or village,

give our performance there, and having provisioned ourselves against the next few days, vanish again, only to reappear many miles further on, when we were again in need of supplies. At all these halting-places I kept a sharp look-out for danger, and generally contrived to engage the headman or some person of importance in conversation, to ascertain whether any emissaries of the Court had visited that place in pursuit of me. It occasioned me no little surprise to find that in none of the towns I came to was anything known of such a matter; indeed, I could not discover that anyone had so much as heard of the downfall of the great Cánar Sahib. I attributed this partly to the fact that I had not as yet reached any place of importance, and partly to the fact that in this barbarous land news does not travel as freely as in more favoured countries. Indeed, I found that before long I had penetrated to a region where my very name was unknown; so deeply were the inhabitants sunk in the contemplation of their own petty affairs, that it seemed they had never so much as heard of the gallant Frank who had made so much noise at the Imperial Court. As for the pursuit, I suppose that my plan of running down the Jumna for a considerable distance before striking across country had misled my enemies; and I understood that my extraordinary good fortune in capturing my most dangerous foe had deprived those who would seek to injure me of their chief strength and their leading spirit. Both these suppositions were correct; but I afterwards learned that I owed my safety to another circumstance as well; that is, to the ancient kindness of the Emperor towards me; for although he could not

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openly forbid pursuit of me, yet he gave my enemies to understand very clearly that he would look with small favour upon any who should be too active against me.

Our way lay for the most part through a kind of desert; over a vast unending plain of which only those portions were cultivated which lay within reach of some town or village. The more remote parts, to which I confined myself as much as possible, were scantily overgrown with ragged thorn bushes and tussocks of coarse grass. Now and again we crossed the beds of streams, which were beginning to assume once more their customary aspect; for during the greater part of the year they were empty, save for some deep and stagnant pools through which no current runs except in the rainy season. These torrent beds occasioned us much painful toil, for they are bordered by wide strips of country torn into the most inconceivable confusion by the floods, and the passage of these nullahs, as they are called, entailed endless clambering up and down the sides of miniature mountains, which I found excessively wearisome in the terrible heat of the sun. Indeed, if I had found the heat oppressive in Agra, I now found it almost unendurable, being constantly exposed to it without any shelter, and obliged to go almost naked in accordance with the character I had chosen to assume.

I could never sufficiently wonder at the extraordinary numbers of those wild creatures, great and small, which haunt these regions. Besides the larger and more ferocious beasts, such as jackals, wolves, and tigers, there are countless swarms of other animals no less offensive in their degree. I

saw many horrible serpents, as well as lizards of the length of a man's arm; and although my fellow Nathoo assured me that the last were not venomous, I had ever a disgust to them, and am persuaded that they are not so innocent as he would have me believe. The flies of all kinds tormented me, for it is notorious that these dreadful pests discover a peculiar satisfaction in sucking the blood of a Frank, which is perhaps more wholesome than that of the barbarians; and although a man should spend his whole time in destroying those which settle on his skin, he would yet be able to make no impression upon their blood-thirsty and persistent legions. Nor was there any lack of creatures which did us no harm, and which indeed gladdened our eyes by the contemplation of their brilliant hues and graceful movements. There are incredible numbers of small green parrots, which fly in such great flocks as to darken the sky as they pass. Many peacocks are to be seen, and great herds of graceful antelopes and deers; and besides these, lesser creatures, squirrels of a different colour to those of Europe, and a kind of large and handsome rat, called *mangus*,* which I am assured will valiantly assault and prevail against the most gigantic and ferocious serpents. He is provided by nature with a peculiar juice, which protects him, and renders him indifferent to the venom of his foes, whose flesh he will ravenously devour when he has brought the combat to a successful issue, without suffering the least inconvenience from that poisonous repast.

I found a great deal of pleasure in the contempla-

* The Mongoose.

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tion of these works of nature ; but in general, during our marches in the wilderness, my mind was occupied by other matters. I could not refrain from constantly recalling the past glories of my state, and lamenting the miserable fate which had overtaken me. 'Twas indeed painful to reflect that I, a gentleman of exalted birth, who had made Europe ring with his name, and gained such an extraordinary reputation, both for courage and wit, and who more recently had shone the brightest among those dazzling personages who had thronged the barbaric Court of the Mogul, should now be lurking in the wilds of Indoustan, in no better guise than that of a naked saint ; exposed, like any common fellow, to the heat of the sun, the pangs of hunger and thirst, and the myriad perils which beset the traveller in those parched and arid deserts. I am obliged to admit that I was sometimes guilty of repining against the harsh decree of Fate, for I could not discover any particular in which I had been at fault, or any ill-doing or neglect upon my part which had merited such bitter retribution. I sometimes amused myself by wondering what would be the astonishment of those, my comrades in arms, who in my European campaigns were wont to regard me with so much admiration and envy, if they could see my present miserable situation. But I commonly consoled myself by reflecting that no misfortune could tarnish the glory of heroic deeds ; my fame was already secure, and the most bitter assaults of fortune could not rob me of it. Moreover, I reminded myself, that if I was at present obliged to live poorly, I yet carried with me, in that little case which never left my person, the means of subsisting

in that splendid and dignified condition which, before coming to the Indies, poverty had forbidden me to display.

But although I derived some comfort from these philosophical reflections, I still found my situation very irksome ; and I was besides oppressed by those doubts and hesitations in regard to my use of the poor hakim, to which my too tender heart gave rise. To divert my thoughts therefore, I often engaged my man Nathoo in conversation, and I found a great deal of amusement in listening to his simple and ignorant notions. I had often reproached myself that I had made no efforts to inform his errors, and to induce him to enter the bosom of the Holy Church ; but as I have already related, I had found it necessary to deceive the Emperor in this matter, and I judged that it would be inexpedient to make any attempt to convert my servant, who would certainly repeat what I said to him on the subject. My neglect, however disagreeable to myself, was rendered necessary by the circumstances of my life, and I have a strong hope that it may be pardoned to me in view of the necessity I was under of concealing my views. But however this may be, I was now free to say what I liked, and I constantly beguiled the tedium of the way by correcting the more extravagant religious ideas of my servant. I was very successful in my efforts, for the poor fellow had so high an opinion of my discernment that he was ready to profess any belief I desired, and it would have been as easy for me to convert him to the detestable errors of Mohammedanism as to persuade him of the truth of the Catholic faith. I was thus able to relieve my mind of a burden which had long

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weighed upon it; and it is certain that if other important matters had not presently claimed my attention, I should have made the poor heathen a good Catholic; as indeed he afterwards became.

At times also I would speak with Fazal Khan, for in spite of my knowledge of his evil nature, and my determination to persevere in rendering him payment for his wicked actions, I saw no reason why I should not in the meanwhile divert myself by observing the depravity of his mind; indeed, I conceived that I might even gain some spiritual benefit by the contemplation of the degraded state into which this man had fallen by the indulgence of his evil passions. To this end I sometimes questioned him about his actions; and I noted with astonishment, that in any matter which he regarded as finished, in which his schemes could no longer be frustrated by a full exposure, he was perfectly ready to lay bare in the most shameless manner his most secret and detestable deeds, without so much as appearing to understand that there was anything in them which called for the reprobation of honest men. He related treacheries that might have made a devil blush with a simplicity, even with a sort of pride in his own cunning, which inspired me with a horror of him; and he even had the audacity to assert that all men, and even I myself, were capable of similar acts. He felt, or made a pretence of feeling, astonishment when I expressed the horror I felt at his revelations. "O Cárar Sahib," he said once, when I had plainly showed the disgust which he aroused in me, "what need is there now for this assumption of virtue? You do not think me so simple as to believe that you are any better than myself?"

“What!” I cried, “are you then so wicked as to say that I am like you; that I would descend to the vile treacheries which you recount? Base and foolish man! Know that to a Frankish gentleman there is nothing in life of any value at all as compared to his honour; rather than sacrifice which, he will gladly yield his life, considering it better to perish unstained than to live with his reputation besmirched.”

“Ay, ay,” he answered with a sneer, “so we all say; that is what we tell the world. But you and I, Cánar Sahib, know what underlies these brave professions. What! did you not receive bribes from anyone who was foolish enough to give them to you? Did not the whole Court regard you as the most corrupt, where corruption was universal? Did you not lie and cringe to the Emperor? Did you not lead him to suppose that you were about to embrace the creed of Islam, while yet you needed but an invitation to violate the harem of a true believer? Nay, did not you submit like a coward to be thrashed by slaves? The Moguls, let me tell you, regard such pusillanimity as the deepest disgrace; and a man who has submitted to be flogged can never again hold up his head among us. Do not imagine that I blame you; in your place I should have done the like, and you were certainly well-advised to abstain from useless resistance. But although your conduct spoke highly of your discretion, the less said about your valour the better. You purchased your life then at the expense of your honour, which, as it is, to be sure, a flimsy and invisible garment, and moreover in your case was already somewhat stained and tattered, is no great matter.”

“O base and contemptible villain,” I cried, en-

raged by his vile calumnies, " your wickedness blinds you, so that you are unable to see wherein a man of honour differs from such a creature as yourself. Are you so foolish as to suppose that I submitted to the barbarities your slaves practised upon me in order to save my own life? Do you imagine that any danger to myself could have induced me to behave as I did? Know that if I had only been under the necessity of considering myself, I should have certainly offered the most desperate resistance, and although it is probable that I might have been overwhelmed by numbers, yet I should very likely have slain you first, and thus ridded the world of a villain, than whom, I am persuaded, one more contemptible can never have existed. It was not fear that persuaded me to submit, but rather courage of a rare and extraordinary kind, which required me to do violence to my own feelings in order that I might maintain a pretence by which I hoped that the lady who had bestowed her favour upon me might escape the fate which must otherwise overtake her. But such a generosity as I displayed in that matter must necessarily be incomprehensible to such as you. How hardly may a wicked man understand the actions of a Christian gentleman! Yet I would have you consider my behaviour on that occasion, for your own benefit; for indeed, by the contemplation of virtue and honour, you may perchance become sensible of your own wickedness, and conviction of sin is the first step towards repentance and amendment."

With that I sternly bade him march on ahead, for his baseness, and his insensibility to virtue, occasioned me such an excessive disgust that I would speak no more to him at that time. But I held other

conversations with him, and without any difficulty I induced him to acquaint me with the full history of that plot into which I had fallen. Indeed, there was not much for me to learn, for as I have already related, during the time I was in prison I had considered the matter, and had penetrated his designs, so that he could now do no more than confirm what I had already guessed. Whenever I spoke of this matter he would begin to taunt me with what he considered my folly in being caught in his trap—for he was unable to see that it was my own generosity and gallant temper, rather than any skill of his, that had ensnared me—and he would asseverate, with the most malicious satisfaction, that in spite of his present miserable situation he could rejoice at the thought that through him I had been hurled down from my high estate. Indeed, his taunts and exultation became insufferable; but I discovered a way of moderating his venomous delight, for I assured him that although his trap had succeeded as he supposed, yet he had made a small error, for he had timed his appearance in the harem so ill that he came too late to prevent me from enjoying the favours of the Lady Amina. This, to be sure, was not precisely true, but it had the effect I intended, for when he first heard it his jaw dropped, and I could scarce contain my laughter at the consternation which so suddenly replaced his malicious satisfaction. He flew in a violent rage, and swore that I lied; but I persisted in asserting that it was true. In spite of his vehement denials, I could see that he was doubtful; for indeed the Moguls repose no confidence whatever in the virtue of their women; and, in short, the suspicion which I had aroused so poisoned his joy at having outwitted

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me, as to make him refrain from ever again speaking of the matter.

Thus we journeyed through that vast sun-scorched land of Indoustan, greeted, whenever we visited the haunts of men, by the plaudits and reverent admiration of the heathen, who generously supplied our wants. I have dwelt but little upon the hardships which we endured ; for, indeed, although we suffered greatly, yet as I have shown, I so beguiled the way with philosophical reflections, and with conversation upon matters of moment, that I was able to regard with contempt those mere bodily annoyances which are never of much importance to a man of true courage. Indeed, in spite of hardships, I had great cause for thankfulness, having so far been exposed to no other dangers than those incidental to travel in a barbarous country. I had looked indeed for difficulties and perils, and perhaps some desperate escapes from the pursuit of my foes ; and in some wonderful manner I had been spared all risks of this kind. But my immunity in this matter was now at an end, as I shall presently relate.

CHAPTER XIV.

A DREADFUL PERIL, FROM WHICH I ESCAPE WITH GREAT DIFFICULTY.

THE HAKIM MEETS THE DUE REWARD OF HIS INIQUITIES. I
TAKE UP MY ABODE WITH THE JEWELLER ABDUL KARIM.

WE had journeyed in this manner for nearly four weeks, and had covered, I suppose, some five hundred miles without meeting any especial perils or any adventures, save those commonly occurring to travellers. By this time, having seen no sign of pursuit, I became convinced that I had escaped from all danger, and I thought that only some extraordinary mischance could now interrupt my passage to Surat. And yet, had I but known it, 'twas precisely now that the danger that I had for so long escaped was about to fall upon me; and this I might have anticipated if I had more carefully considered my plans.

It was well known at the Court that I had travelled to Agra from the town of Surat, which was indeed the principal port of the Indies used by Europeans. It was, therefore, natural that my enemies should suppose that I would return to the same place, as indeed I intended to do; and they would certainly, in pursuing me, follow the most direct line between the two cities. I had calculated that they would do this, and in journeying south on the river Jumna, I had persuaded myself that as soon as I should change my direction, and striking across the country, set my course for Surat, I should be following a different line, which would never meet the line of the pursuit until each should strike the point to which we were journeying. Thus

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I considered that if my enemies had not discovered my flight down the river, there was but little chance of their falling in with me. My calculations were perfectly correct so far; but there was one important point, which, I shall admit, I had overlooked, namely, that the further I journeyed, the nearer my line would approach to that of my pursuers, so that after a while it would need but a trifling divergence from my true course to make my route fall in with theirs, and this accident was the more likely in that I had no other means of correcting my direction than my observation of the sun, as to where he rose and sank, and my inquiries of the country people, afforded me. It may seem strange that to a man of such perspicacity as my readers know that I possessed, this consideration should never have presented itself; yet so it was, and in the affairs of men you shall constantly observe that even those plans which are constructed with the most sedulous care have some weak points, which do not become apparent until they are put into execution.

From various signs, I now perceived that we were approaching some considerable city. The waste spaces became fewer, and as we journeyed on ceased altogether, and the whole country, so far as the eye could reach in every direction, became covered with crops. Numerous villages were dotted about, and at length I became aware of a continuous line of haze, at some distance on my right hand, which I perceived to be the dust arising from a high road. Far ahead some glittering points appeared, where the sunshine struck upon the domes and turrets of a distant city.

From all these signs, I judged that I was approaching a town of some importance. Hitherto I had avoided all such; but as I have related, my continual immunity from danger had quieted my apprehensions, and had perhaps persuaded me to become too confident. The truth is, that my long wandering in desert places had inspired me with a lively disgust to solitude, and I felt strongly tempted to visit this city, and mingle once again with my kind, though of these there were no better representatives than the fanatical Moguls, or the still more barbarous Indous. When Inclination is at war with Prudence, the issue cannot be considered doubtful; in this kind of strife a man's faculties are apt to play the traitor to him, and instead of acting as sentinels to warn him of approaching danger, range themselves on the side of his desires, which, thus reinforced, easily obtain the victory over his discretion. Thus it was with me: I found no difficulty in persuading myself that I might very well visit the city without the least danger, for I reflected that if there were any hue and cry after me, I could not but have heard some echo of the chase by now. In short, I determined that I would enter the place and give a performance there; and having intimated this to the hakim and Nathoo, I changed the direction of our march, and struck directly across the country to the high road, intending to fall in with the throng, from some of whom I might perhaps gain some intelligence of the Court.

Faith, it was indeed a strange medley that passed continually along the road; and to my ears, accustomed for so long to the silence of the wilderness, the varied cries of the passengers seemed a very

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babel of sound. The way was crowded with people, some going afoot; others riding in native vehicles, on little donkeys, cow-hocked, and seemingly smaller than their riders; on horses; and once, when the train of some petty Raja went past, on elephants. There were great groaning wains loaded with blocks of red stone, rumbling upon wheels made from one solid block of wood indifferently rounded; small two-wheeled carriages of the city, drawn by little ponies with strings of beads around their necks; country carts of different sizes drawn by the odd bullocks of the East, which have a prodigious great hump upon the shoulders, and a long hanging dew-lap; some loaded with grain, others roofed over and crowded with fat bejewelled Indou women and naked children. And for every one that rode there were ten that went afoot; no fat, greasy, money-changer of the city, lolling in his white robes upon a wretched ass that seemed like to sink beneath him, but had two or three servants who trudged in the dust beside him. Among the foot passengers were old men of the villages, naked but for a loin cloth, with wrinkled skins and limbs miraculously thin; brown buxom women wrapped in soiled blue cloths, with jewels in their nostrils, bearing little brown babies hanging upon their dusky dugs, or riding astride upon their hips; lusty young cultivators with long, brass-tipped staves; soldiers; merchants; a wild-looking fakir going scandalously naked; strong fellows toiling, four together, under the weight of a curtained chair, which they bore upon long poles on their shoulders, in which reclined the wife of some rich man; jugglers; shop-keepers; and scores of others whose callings I did not know. And all

this throng sweated merrily along in the heat, amid a great cloud of dust of their own making. The confusion was increased by a very babel of cries; for not a soul among them but was continually shouting to a comrade who had lagged behind, or cursing those who blocked the way in front, wrangling, laughing, and chattering, for all the world like a troupe of monkeys in the tree-tops. Faith, 'twas a merry scene, and did my heart good after so long a sojourn in the deserts.

Into this stream of persons we plunged, being received with a great deal of deference by the Indous among them, though they were too much occupied by their own concerns to pay much heed to us. 'Twas odd that no sooner did I mingle with the crowd than I became aware that all were inspired with some kind of excitement. I do not know how this feeling became impressed upon me, since I was notified of it by none of my bodily senses. But no sooner had I become conscious of it, than various words and phrases I heard from the wayfarers confirmed the notion. I had not ventured on approaching the city without making a resolution to observe the utmost caution; and being willing to discover what might be afoot, I directed Nathoo to keep a vigilant eye upon the hakim; and on his assuring me that he would watch him faithfully, I slackened my pace and suffered them to leave me behind. By going slower than those who surrounded me, I found myself presently among travellers who could not have seen, through the crowd in front of them, the persons with whom I had been in company. I now began to look about me, and spying at least a decent fellow who went alone, I saluted him courteously,

and adjusting my pace to his, endeavoured to engage him in conversation. I found him very willing to talk, and after some preliminary civilities I began to lead the conversation in the direction I desired, having an especial care, however, that he should not perceive what I was at. My experience at the Court had practised me in this kind of subtlety, and my knowledge now stood me in good stead, for I was very soon in possession of the information I sought. The fellow told me that about an hour back there had come pricking along the road a body of Imperial cavalry, going towards the city, dashing through the crowd regardless of whom they rode down, cursing, and striking with the flats of their swords those who stood in their way, and, in short, conducting themselves in the usual fashion of these gentry. There was one with them, said my friend, who drew rein, and questioned the wayfarers as to whether they knew aught of a Frank who had passed that way, flying from the Imperial vengeance. Getting no information, he had cursed them all as unbelievers, and had ridden on.

Once started on this subject, I had no need to question the fellow, for he was very ready to tell me all he knew, and, as it appeared, a great deal more. He had been in Agra some time back, he said, and having been about the Court he had no difficulty in recognising this officer as the Minister Wazir Ali. I asked him if he had ever seen this Frank, and he said, yes, he knew him very well, having done some business with him. This was certainly false, for I had never clapped eyes on the fellow before. But I found that he did indeed know something of my exploits at Court, and I guessed that, like any other

gossip, he was willing to gain distinction by claiming acquaintance with a great man of whom he knew nothing save by hearsay. After telling me all he knew or could invent, he fell to cursing the Moguls—for he was an Indou—and expressed a hope that the Frank might escape them. I did not take up this subject, considering that I might perhaps betray myself by too much warmth; and I was very sure that however much he might protest his hatred of the Moguls, he would readily betray me to them, if he thought he would get a reward.

I now wished to leave him, having found out all I wanted to know, but I considered that I must not do so too abruptly. In reply to his questions I told him that I was the disciple of a Saddhu; and on hearing this he began to treat me with more respect than he had shown me before. At last, after a good deal of trouble, I got rid of him, having promised that he should have an opportunity of witnessing my performance; and bidding him farewell, I hastened to overtake my party.

I had now to consider what I should do in the danger which threatened me. I knew very well that if the hakim should discover that his ancient ally Wazir Ali was in the town, his hopes would revive, and he would certainly commit some treacherous act. But in spite of the danger, I had by now conceived such a disgust for solitude, that rather than fare out into the wilderness again, I determined that I would enter the city. And, indeed, less boldness was required for the execution of this project than might be thought; and I had several reasons for supposing that I might be safer within the walls than I should be if I should fly again to

the open country. For in that great city, I thought it would be strange if I could not find some harbourage; and the worthy fellow to whom I had spoken had informed me that the inhabitants of the place were nearly all Gentiles, who would therefore be the less ready to deliver me up to the Moguls, whose contumelious oppression had earned their ill-will. Moreover, I knew very well that Wazir Ali would send horsemen to scour the country round about; and as we must go afoot, and progress slowly, they would almost certainly fall in with us. Taking all these matters into consideration, I determined that I could not do better than seek hiding in the city; and I thought that I might perhaps be able to remain in secret until after the departure of Wazir Ali and his men, so that by giving them time to travel some considerable distance ahead of me, I could continue my journey in perfect security. But I would form no definite plan, considering that it would be wiser to be guided by the course of events, and to make my actions accord with such circumstances as might arise.

I discovered that I had chanced to arrive in this place on the occasion of one of the barbarous festivals of the Indous, and this fact was accountable for the extraordinary numbers of persons going to the city. But although the wayfarers were too weary with their journey, and too eager to push on, to pay much heed to us, yet when we came to the outskirts of the town we found great numbers of idle persons, who discovered the greatest pleasure at the arrival of a Saddhu, and crowded around us with many exclamations of respectful admiration. So many persons, indeed, attached themselves to

us that in a short time we formed a considerable procession, and my train grew ever greater as the bystanders joined those who were already following. This circumstance occasioned me a great deal of secret alarm; I had hoped to enter the town quietly, without attracting attention, and I could not but believe that the uproar and disturbance which our passage gave rise to must be dangerous in the highest degree. I began to curse my folly in having entered the city by the principal gate: I should rather have slipped in at some other quarter. But I understood that nothing could be more dangerous than to arouse suspicion, and that my best plan would be to submit to necessity. I determined to content my admirers by giving them a performance immediately, after which they might perhaps be satisfied to leave us in peace; and, indeed, there was this advantage in such a course, that we were in much need of some food, and offerings would certainly pour in upon us when we had exhibited the austerities of our philosopher.

I intimated the intention I had formed to those about me, who received the news with shouts of joy. We were conducted through various narrow ways, each of which contributed many persons to our following; and we were carried at length to an open space where such performances commonly took place. Then began that business which had grown so wearisome to me, the performance of those foolish austerities which the heathen consider signs of especial sanctity. They are not sufficiently acute to perceive that however disagreeable the sensations to which these stupid actions give rise at first, use so rapidly inures their professors to suffer-

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ing that they soon become able to perform the most astonishing penances with very little discomfort. Even the hakim, though he had not as yet been long among the saints, suffered but little after the first few occasions ; and I am persuaded that the humiliation which he felt as a Mohammedan in displaying himself to divert the heathen, was much more distressing to him than the mere bodily pains which he endured.

According to our usual custom, we exhibited our philosopher first in the torment of the tripod and fires which I have described in another place, receiving the devout acclamations of the Indous as a reward. I was very uneasy all this while, being full of apprehensions lest my enemies should pass that way. Indeed, my situation was not at all comfortable, for we were surrounded by a dense ring of worshippers numbering several thousands, and we could not hope to make our way through them in case of need, if they should endeavour to oppose our passage.

I kept the hakim rather longer than usual in his strange posture, being desirous of making a good impression. When we set him on the ground again, he needed some little attention, and after performing what was necessary for him, I turned to prepare the spiked bed, upon which he was presently to lie. I had just completed these preparations when a disturbance among the onlookers attracted my attention ; and looking up, I saw a sight which set my heart leaping and throbbing very unpleasantly. All those dismal apprehensions which had oppressed me ever since I had attracted the notice of the townsfolk were now fulfilled ; for

outside the circle formed by the throng of worshippers stood a body of a dozen horsemen, in whose leader I recognised the villainous Wazir Ali, my detestable foe.

Whether he penetrated my disguise with eyes sharpened by the envy and hatred which he nourished, or whether he had received some information which enabled him to recognise me, I cannot guess; but he knew me, and met my gaze with a smile of gratified triumph. Without doubt he made certain that he had entrapped me at last; indeed, if he had not thrown away his advantage by his own foolish conduct, it is very likely that I should have been slain on the spot, or dragged a miserable captive back to Agra.

None of my worshippers had observed the Moguls, the noise of whose approach had been drowned by the excessive uproar of admiration which greeted the hakim's performance; but seeing me stand staring at him with perhaps some little consternation in my look, they followed the direction of my gaze. No sooner did they set eyes upon the Moguls than some threatening cries began to be heard. This should have warned Wazir Ali; if he had been a man of any discretion, he must certainly have understood the folly of interrupting an Indou ceremony, more especially at a period of a religious festival, when the feelings of the people were inflamed, and in a town where the Moguls were few in number, and the temper of the mob was hostile to them. However, he was accustomed to live in Agra, where the Indous are overawed by the Imperial forces, and never venture to resist a Mogul officer; and no doubt his joy at discovering me at last, when it seemed that I had got clear away, made him over-

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eager to snatch at his triumph, and forbade him to use that nice discretion which the case demanded.

Certainly, there was no need for any rash action, for if he had posted his men judiciously, and waited for the performance to come to an end, I could not have escaped him. But he must needs try to seize me at once, and without pausing an instant to consider what he should do, he gave a signal to his men, and setting his spurs into his horse's flanks, he attempted to force a passage through the crowd, looking, I suppose, for them to make way before him.

Sure, no action was ever more ill-timed, for the Indous were at the highest frenzy of excitement at the religious prodigy which they had just witnessed. They knew nothing of the real state of the case, and saw in the conduct of Wazir Ali nothing but a wanton and insolent interruption of their ceremonies. This was sufficient to rouse their resentment, and to make matters worse, my foe must needs drive his horse over a woman, who was crouching on the ground. She was knocked down, and the beast setting one of his hoofs on her back, she set up such a screeching as served to raise the passions of the mob to that pitch at which they could no longer be controlled; for there was a sudden roar of anger, and all the worshippers rose as one man, and hurled themselves upon the horsemen. In an instant Wazir Ali and his men were surrounded by a raging sea of Indous. Those nearest to the riders seized their bridles and endeavoured to unseat them. The Moguls were instantly brought to a halt, for their number did not amount to more than thirty, while the mob around them contained several thousand persons.

I suppose that even then Wazir Ali might have

pacified the crowd and escaped from them, if he had retained his self-possession ; but he was so arrant a coward that he immediately became terrified at his situation, and at the angry faces and the cries of the mob. Instead of endeavouring to quiet them, or to divert their wrath from himself, as he might very easily have done by telling them the truth about the supposed Saddhu, he drew his sword, and began to threaten those around him. This only increased the fury of the Indous, and one of them seized him by the foot, and endeavoured to drag him from the saddle ; whereupon he had the folly to strike at him with his sword. Instantly a scene of the most frightful confusion began ; the troopers followed the example of their leader, and the blades were reddened in an instant. Shrieks of agony and rage arose, and the Indous began to strike with their long brass-shod staves, and to hurl stones and other missiles, which however, did as much damage in their own ranks as in those of the Moguls. Although they had no better weapons than these with which to oppose the horsemen, I anticipated that the Indous, by reason of their vast superiority in numbers, and the extraordinary fanaticism which animated them, would succeed in destroying Wazir Ali and his men ; indeed, several of the troopers were already unhorsed, and, I doubt not, torn to pieces by the ferocious mob.

I might now very easily have made my escape ; but I remained gazing at this horrid massacre, hoping to witness the destruction of my foes. But at this moment the hakim, whom I had seized at the first sign of trouble, must needs set up a loud cry, in the hope of attracting the notice of his allies. Sure, he was very little likely to succeed in this, by reason of the great uproar. Nevertheless, I turned upon

him, and ordered him to be silent, swearing that if he did not obey, I would instantly plunge my knife into his bosom. But he paid not the least attention to my words; indeed, I believe that he did not hear them. He appeared to be mad; doubtless, the fury and hatred which he had suppressed for so long had brot en their bonds at the sight of his allies. The foam flew from his lips; his face was contorted, and his eyes blazed with the most frightful expression of malice and fury which it is possible to conceive. He continued to utter the most hideous cries, shrieking out all sorts of warnings to the Moguls, and paying not the least heed to my threats and curses.

I now perceived that at all costs I must stay his clamour, for some persons who took no part in the fray were beginning to stare at us in astonishment, and I dreaded each moment lest some reckless words from his lips should inform them of the deception which had been practised upon them. Moreover, in a hasty glance, I had discovered that Wazir Ali, with three or four of his troopers, had fought their way to the edge of the mob, and in a few minutes they would be free, and would attack us.

I therefore put myself in front of the hakim, and seizing him by the throat, I raised my knife. "Be silent, dog!" I cried furiously, squeezing his throat at the same time, "or I shall slay you instantly."

But with a vigour which astonished me in so old a man, he dashed me aside, and continued his outcries. I saw that I could not cow him, and being rendered desperate by the imminence of the danger—for some persons had seen my rough usage of the saint, and began to approach in a threatening posture—I determined to slay him and make my escape. But at this moment of supreme peril that

tenderness of heart which has so often hampered me forbade me to inflict upon the treacherous hakim the death which he so richly merited. Though I raised my knife twice, I could not strike him defenceless; the very extent of his daring saved him, and his disregard of my threats, and carelessness of defence, paralysed my arm. I could not slay a man who would not even step aside to save his life.

I cast a desperate glance around and determined to fly, for at that instant Wazir Ali and his men broke free from the mob, and set their horses' heads towards us. "Come then, Nathoo," I cried, "seize him, and fly." I caught the hakim by one arm, and Nathoo seized him by the other; and wrenching him round, we began to run as fast as we could toward the opening of an alley, which lay about a hundred paces away. Sure, the hakim was a maniac; he struggled furiously, even biting like a dog at our hands, and then turning his head back over his shoulder and uttering the most frightful imprecations and cries for succour to Wazir Ali. He was so strong in his madness, and struggled so fiercely, that we could scarce drag him along; and I perceived that we must either abandon him or allow ourselves to be captured.

There were about fifty yards between me and the horsemen, and I must cross an equal space of ground before I could gain the entrance to the alley, in which I hoped to find refuge. In this extremity I could not hesitate; unwilling as I was to permit the villain to escape, I yet would not be so foolish as to throw away my life on his account. I therefore loosed my hold on him, and bidding Nathoo do the like, I ran on, scarce venturing to hope that I could yet escape.

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I had covered half the distance, when a horrid scream of fear behind me made me turn my head, and what I saw brought me to a halt. Fazal Khan was on his knees, at the spot where I had left him, his arms outstretched in an attitude which seemed to implore mercy. Wazir Ali was driving down upon him at full gallop, his sword uplifted. He struck the instant he came within reach, and the hakim rolled over with a shriek. It would seem that Wazir Ali recognised him even as the blow fell, too late to check it; and Fazal Khan's death shriek and his murderer's cry of horror rang out together. Wazir Ali reined his horse back on its haunches, and sprang to the ground. His men hesitated, and then turned and rode back to him.

For my part, I seized this opportunity of gaining the alley, and when I reached it I turned again to see what was taking place. But in those few minutes the scene had changed; where I had seen the figures of Wazir Ali, Fazal Khan, and the troopers, was now a raging sea of Indous. They must have been close behind my foe, though I had not observed them, since all my attention was taken up by the death of Fazal Khan. Now, having witnessed the murder of their saint, they were driven to a pitch of fury which was irresistible. A horrible sound came up from the mob, rising from a thousand throats inarticulate with rage. I saw Wazir Ali's riderless horse in the midst of the crowd; a moment afterwards I caught a glimpse of my enemy himself, heaved up somehow for an instant by a wave in the tossing sea of fanatics. Then he disappeared again, and high above the hoarse clamouring of the mob I heard him scream.

Sure, I knew he might as well hope to pass un-

scathed through a roaring furnace as bring his life out of the clutches of the frantic Gentoos. Indeed, as I afterwards heard, they would not be content until they had torn him limb from limb. But though I could not now see what was happening, I knew beyond all doubt that his death was certain; yet, notwithstanding this, we were not out of danger. At any moment the mob might discover the deception which had been practised upon them in the person of the supposed saint, and their wrath would certainly turn upon Nathoo and myself, his disciples. Moreover, though I did not imagine that one trooper of those who had been with Wazir Ali would escape from the fury of the mob, yet they were but a small detachment of those who had entered the town. At any moment their comrades might appear, and among them would certainly be some who knew me.

As we plunged into the alley, I knew not where to go, nor had I any plan of action. I wished no more than to leave behind me the scene of that horrid massacre, and find some spot where I might rest awhile in peace, and consider what to do. In this uncertainty we wandered on, nor do I suppose that anything but fresh disasters could have befallen us, if Providence had not directed that the worthy merchant, with whom I had conversed on the road, should witness the catastrophe from a safe place. That was what had occurred, and seeing us fly from the scene the good man followed, and came up with us just as we were hesitating at a spot where the alley branched off in two directions.

“O chela-ji! O worthy disciple!” he called out as he approached; “do not go forward, or you will

certainly fall into the hands of the rest of the Moguls, who have been warned of what has taken place, and are now on their way hither."

I cannot describe the delight with which, in my distressful and perilous situation, I recognised a friendly voice. I greeted the good man with the greatest cordiality, and besought him, if he were well-disposed to me, to show me a place where I might find refuge.

At that he pulled a long face. "Why, look you," he answered, "I wish you well, both because I have taken a liking to you and because I desire to thwart the Moguls. But I dare not shelter you, for if it should be discovered, my life would certainly be forfeited. Besides, I do not believe that you are what you represented yourself to be; in fact, I cannot understand why the Mogul attacked you, save by supposing that one of your party, perhaps you yourself, was the Frank whom they are seeking. In that case you have certainly imposed upon me."

I perceived that his suspicions were so thoroughly aroused that it would be impossible to allay them; and as every moment of delay increased the peril in which we stood, I resolved to admit the truth, and to appeal to his cupidity rather than to his good nature, which, I saw clearly, was too easily overcome by his fears to be of any use to me. "Faith," I cried, assuming an air of candour, "you have guessed correctly, for I am indeed that famous Frankish nobleman whose reputation, I have no doubt, has penetrated even to this distant spot. If you know as much of me as you pretended when we conversed on the road, you must be very well

aware that while my friendship is desirable, no sensible man would incur my enmity. I still have it in my power to confer substantial benefits upon you, if you will do as I direct."

Although he still showed some uneasiness, I perceived that my speech had made a good impression upon him. "What would you have me do?" he asked doubtfully.

"Why," I answered, "you shall take me, and this worthy fellow here, into your house, and give us shelter until the hour of darkness. That is all I require of you, and I am prepared to pay handsomely for the service. There can be no danger in what I propose, for I shall not remain after it grows dark."

He still seemed unwilling, and it was only after a good deal of argument that I induced him to do as I wished. I was excessively uneasy all this time, fearing that at any moment the Mogul horsemen might arrive; but I concealed my fears, and would not let him see that I was uncomfortable, lest he should conceive an exaggerated idea of the danger of harbouring me. When at last I had overcome his objections, he led the way through some unfrequented parts to a decent house, which we entered. He was very fearful, and took especial care that none of his people should see us; and leading us into an inner room, he desired us to remain strictly within, and on no account to leave it until we were ready to depart altogether.

"But look you, my good man!" I cried, "that does not suit me at all!" The truth is, that I had already conceived a plan, and it was necessary that Nathoo should go abroad, and obtain some things I

needed. "Although I told you that I would leave this place after dark, I shall certainly not depart unless I can obtain a disguise. I intend to despatch my servant to purchase what I want in the bazaars."

After some grumbling he agreed, and promised that he would keep watch against my man's return. I thereupon directed Nathoo to purchase for me a complete set of apparel, such as a decent Mussalman trader commonly uses; warning him that if he should be questioned, he must say that he was the servant of a rich jewel merchant, who required some change of raiment. I considered that there was very little danger in sending him out, for he had rarely gone to the Court at Agra, where I had always been attended by Mirza Khan; and it was therefore little likely that he would be recognised by the Moguls. As a disciple of a Saddhu, he had looked sufficiently wild and unkempt, and I directed him before starting to remedy the disorder of his hair and beard, which were much matted and tangled; and having done this, he looked like any respectable Indou servant, such as no one would give a second thought to. He then set forth, leaving me to expect his return with as much patience as I could muster.

When I was alone, I began to consider what had occurred, and I found good cause for rejoicing. There could not be any doubt that my two enemies were slain, and I did not believe that the troopers whom Wazir Ali had brought with him would pursue me any further, although perhaps they would search the city for me. It would be necessary for me to remain in hiding for a while, but the danger would not be very great, if only I could discover a

suitable place of refuge ; and as soon as they should have left the city—as I did not doubt they would do before long—I might continue my journey to Surat with no greater risk than that of falling in with some officer of the Court whose business might have brought him so far from Agra.

I could not but marvel at the wonderful favour of Providence, which had so constantly preserved me in the greatest dangers ; and I reflected, with a good deal of astonishment, upon the fate which had overtaken my foes. I have already related how the tenderness of my disposition caused me to prosecute my intentions towards the hakim only with the greatest reluctance. I was minded, indeed, to release him as soon as I should arrive at Surat ; after which he might return to Agra and resume his former way of living. But Providence would not permit this, being determined that he should not escape the punishment which his crimes had merited ; and I have very little doubt that the riot in which he and his contemptible allies had been destroyed was made to take place by a special heavenly edict, designed by the double object of protecting me from their machinations and of awarding them their deserts. This conviction filled me with gratitude and awe, and I passed a considerable time in meditation and in profitable contemplation of the justice of Providence.

Nathoo returned in due course, and informed me that he had met with no untoward accident, though he said that he had seen some of the troopers who were searching the city. With his assistance, I now busied myself in altering my appearance. I cut off my beard with a good deal of reluctance, for

among the Moguls, who are very curious in cultivating that kind of adornment, there was none who could boast of so luxuriant a tuft. But I had bethought me of a certain dealer in gems whom I had known at Agra. He was a Turk, and wore no beard, and he had told me that his countrymen often had their chins bare; though the Mussalmans of Indoustan consider this a disgrace. I proposed the like character as a disguise, considering that a Turk would certainly exhibit some peculiarities in his religious and other practices; and in this way, I could account for any mistakes I should make. The loss of my beard caused a most astonishing alteration in my appearance, so that I could almost have ventured into the presence of the Great Mogul himself without any fear of being detected.

Thus disguised, as soon as it became dark, I took leave of the worthy fellow who had succoured me, not forgetting to make him a handsome present. His gratitude for my munificence, and his relief at my departure, made him more cordial than he had hitherto shown himself, and he desired me to pardon his reluctance to shelter me, assuring me that it had not been owing to any dislike of myself. I replied that I did not bear him any ill-will; and bidding him farewell, I set out with Nathoo, keeping a very sharp look-out for the troopers, though I did not imagine that they would know me, so greatly had the loss of my beard altered my appearance.

As soon as I got into the bazaars, I inquired of a Believer where I should find the shops of the jewellers; and following his directions, I made my way thither. Looking about me, I at last chose a shop—or rather a house, for the most considerable

jewel merchants do not display their goods as the other traders do—which seemed, by its size, to belong to a man of wealth; and entering, I found the master seated in a front apartment. I was well acquainted with the customs of these gentry, and I engaged the merchant in conversation, saying that I was myself a trader in gems, and had some business which I had no doubt he would be willing to transact for me. I inquired if he had any rubies, and whether he would be willing to exchange them against some diamonds; and on his assenting, I said that I would bring my stones to him on the morrow. This was no more than an excuse, for what I desired was that he would give me a lodging. He received my statements very civilly, and after some further conversation, in which I took care to inform him that I was a Turk, and that I carried jewels of very great value with me, I asked him to be so good as to direct me to a place where I might be sheltered, as I was newly arrived; adding that as my merchandise was very valuable, I did not desire to go to any of the common lodging houses. This had the effect I intended; he feared lest I should get into communication with some other merchant, whereby he would lose the profit he hoped to make of me, and this notion induced him to express a desire that I would rest in his house. I thanked him for his civility, but said that I would not inconvenience him to that degree, whereupon he became more urgent; and, in short, I suffered myself to be persuaded to fall in with his views, and with a great deal of satisfaction at my success, I took up my abode with him.

CHAPTER XV.

RELIGIOUS CHARACTER OF MY HOST. A MOGUL WINE-PARTY.
 I HEAR GOOD NEWS. I SET OUT FOR HIRABAD, AND LODGE
 WITH HAFIZULLAH. A FRIGHTFUL DISASTER.

My good host, whose name was Abdul Karim, was by way of being a devout Mussalman, and he had a reputation among his colleagues in the bazaar for the most distinguished piety; a reputation which was based chiefly upon the custom, which he practised assiduously, of repeating chapters of the Koran whenever his business left him any leisure, and flavouring his speech with copious extracts from the same holy book. He delighted in that peculiar kind of argumentation which is in such favour among the more religious, that is, disputing with a great deal of ingenuity about some trifling point of Mohammedan law. I was very ready to oblige him in this matter, for my practise at the Court, in disputation with the doctors, and with Aurungzebe himself, had given me a good deal of facility in such exercises; and I constantly engaged the worthy jeweller, and by tempering my wit with discretion, and allowing him to gain some notable victories over me in this strife, I endeared myself so much to him, that he was pleased to compliment me upon my learning and ability. Indeed, he conceived such an affection for me—which was increased by some transactions in which I suffered him to practise some petty frauds upon me—that he so far confided in me as to allow me to understand that he was by no means so ferociously virtuous as he pretended to be. Indeed, so far from that being the case, he was secretly a

man of pleasure ; and after he had assured himself of my discretion, he introduced me to his select company of boon companions.

After I had been in his house for about a week, he contrived, during a religious discussion in which we were engaged, to mention the subject of wine, which is prohibited by the Prophet. We had been discussing the different degrees of iniquity of various offences, and the jeweller took occasion to ask me whether I considered wine-drinking to be one of those crimes which are obnoxious to severe punishment. This matter is a cause of much debate among Mohammedans, for the drinking of wine is forbidden by the Prophet ; but yet not in very severe terms. Moreover, several of the recent Emperors had openly used this kind of indulgence, so that it had also become common among the public ; but a strict Mohammedan, such as my host professed to be, would certainly have lost his reputation if it had become known that he was a wine-bibber.

From a certain anxiety in his manner, I thought I could perceive what kind of answer he hoped to get, and I therefore determined to oblige him. “ Why,” I cried, “ It is true that the Prophet—may his name be exalted—has forbidden true believers to take wine ; but we are to consider the words in which he has expressed his interdiction. It is said in the Koran that a Mussalman should not take wine, because such indulgence is more likely to produce harm than profit. Evidently, common persons, being ill-instructed, and lacking in wisdom, would be likely to suffer some evil by becoming intoxicated, and perhaps while in this condition such persons might be led into committing some wicked actions. But as

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for such men as you and I, who are sufficiently discreet to avoid evil consequences, there can be no harm in taking wine; though it should be done secretly, lest the commonalty should be persuaded to do likewise. You know that wine will be permitted in Paradise, and this proves that it is not in itself wrong to drink it in moderation."

While I was speaking, I observed that a look of pleasure began to overspread the respectable countenance of my host; and when I had done, he addressed me with a great deal of cordiality. "You have uttered opinions which are the same as my own," he replied; "there can be no doubt that you have correctly understood the Prophet's reasons for his prohibition. Certainly, it is not to be supposed that such persons as you and I would allow ourselves to become intoxicated. In short, I may inform you that I am myself in the habit of drinking wine occasionally, in the company of some discreet and learned men, though I do not think it proper to allow this to be generally known. There can be no harm, however, in telling it to a man of such discretion as yourself."

"Certainly not," I replied. "I also drink a little wine, now and again."

"That is well," replied the jeweller. "You will not be surprised to learn that a party of wise men are coming to-night to engage in learned conversation with me; and we shall probably enliven our understandings by partaking moderately of the juice of the grape. If you will be of the company, I feel assured that you will agree with me as to the reverend character of my friends."

I assented very readily to his proposition, for I was

curious to witness one of those secret wine-parties, of which I had heard a good deal at Court. When the evening came, I found that, at least as regards outward appearance, his description of his guests was correct. They were all men of a certain age; like himself, grave in bearing, gray-bearded, and decorous; their conversation was full of pious allusions, as is the custom of the Mohammedans; but as I knew very well, most of the older men among the Moguls have a dignified and respectable appearance, which sometimes conceals the most depraved and contemptible characters.

Most of the guests seemed a little uneasy in my presence, and seeing this, the jeweller took an opportunity of assuring them of my discretion, describing me as a Turkish dealer in gems, of great wealth, and of the utmost piety and learning. This removed their doubts, and several of them addressed me courteously; and by my replies I took care to let them see that I was not too strait-laced in some matters. Presently wine was brought, in curiously wrought gold vessels, and the jeweller, by way of giving his friends a proof of my discretion, offered it first to me.

'Twas but a niggardly and impotent juice; very different from the ardent wines of Europe. I could not relish such a thin fluid; moreover, the flavour was spoiled, to my taste, by the addition of some perfume, which I found very disagreeable. Being used to a more generous liquor, this wine had not the slightest effect upon me; and even the Moguls drank large quantities before they attained their end, which, as I quickly perceived, was no other than to become as deeply intoxicated as possible. Their tongues be-

came loosened after a time, and the grave speech with which they had begun gave place to a lively conversation, in which they permitted themselves the utmost freedom. My worthy host drank more than any of them; his face became flushed and his eyes bloodshot; and he laughed uproariously, wagging his long gray beard and holding his sides, at the lascivious jests with which some of the company began to oblige us. Sure, 'twas an odd spectacle to see that reverend old man dishonouring his gray hairs, and giving the lie to the reputation which he had obtained.

I was sufficiently disgusted by their conduct, but worse was to follow, for when all the guests were more or less intoxicated, the jeweller had a troupe of dancing girls brought in. These females performed with a good deal of skill upon some musical instruments, and the leader of them sang one of those passionate love songs in which the Moguls delight. But when the dancing began, I could not restrain a feeling of astonishment at the freedom and wantonness of their attitudes and gestures. This, however, gave the Moguls the greatest delight; they applauded the dancers, and plied them with wine, and urged them on to yet more indecorous displays. Some of the gray-beards so far disgraced themselves as to embrace these nymphs, and one old man, taking a girl upon his lap, began toying with her in the most disgraceful manner, permitting her to set his turban awry, and to make him ridiculous by dividing his beard into two plaits, twisting them around his ears, and daubing his cheeks and nose with some rouge which she carried in a pot at her waist.

In short, the scene became a debauch, such as I do not care to describe any further. For my part, I could take no pleasure in such scenes as these; for as I have related, the wine took no effect upon me, and remaining perfectly sober, I could only contemplate with disgust the scandalous behaviour of these old men, who should rather have set an example of piety and decorum. I hope I can take my cups with any gentleman; but though I do not set up for a saint, yet I have certainly never been guilty, even when in liquor, of such follies as I witnessed on this occasion. Indeed, I would have withdrawn, save that by doing so I should have given offence to my host, and perhaps aroused his suspicions. So I was obliged to remain with them, hiding my disgust as best I could, until the guests saw fit to depart, which they did at a very late hour.

Although this orgy was very distasteful to me, yet I was glad to have witnessed it, for it enabled me to understand the true value of that assumption of excessive piety which is so common among the Moguls. As for my host the jeweller, it was evident that he considered there was no longer any need to maintain a pretence before me, and he allowed me to perceive his true character, which was that of a hoary debauchee. He professed a great attachment to me, which I found inconvenient, for in truth I disliked him; but as I believed the Imperial troopers were still in the place, I was obliged to keep on good terms with him, for I could not yet afford to do anything which would deprive me of my only shelter. But I was determined to remain no longer than I need, and a few days after the

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wine-party I received the news of the troopers' departure for which I had been waiting so eagerly.

I was dozing about mid-day, in the little apartment which had been given over to my use, cursing the heat, and regretting that prudence compelled me to remain within the house, when I heard a sound which set my heart beating very violently, namely, the jingling of spurs and accoutrements.

A strange voice greeted my host, who replied in a voice of astonishment, "O Shams-ud-din, what do you here?"

"Why," answered the stranger, "I was one of that party which came hither with Wazir Ali, in pursuit of a fugitive Frank. Being here, what better could I do than pay a visit of respect to the brother of my father's wife?"

"You are welcome," replied the jeweller, in a tone lacking in cordiality. Thereupon he sent for refreshments, and desired his nephew to seat himself. They had some indifferent conversation, to which I paid no heed; but after a while, the jeweller returned to the subject of which I wished to hear.

"Have you then captured the Frank?" he asked.

"Wallahi! no," replied the trooper. "He has escaped us. Certainly, those tales of him must be true, which relate that he is in league with some powerful Jinns; for not only has he slipped out of our hands, but he has brought the most accursed misfortunes upon us."

"How is that?" asked my host.

"Why," continued the other, "it appears that he brought hither with him the Emperor's hakim, who everyone supposed had been devoured by a crocodile. Wazir Ali, our leader, with some score

or so of our number, happened upon him, and had certainly taken him, but by the exercise of his diabolical arts—Allah curse him!—he caused a vast multitude of the Gentoos to set upon them. By some mischance, Wazir Ali slew the hakim, not knowing him, and was himself slaughtered by the heathen. The Frank escaped, and has disappeared, aided no doubt by the Jinn.”

“Truly,” observed the jeweller, “it is a pretty tale you have to carry back to the Emperor!”

“Ay, that is so. Indeed, we shall not venture to return, for we should certainly be held responsible for the death of our leader. He is so powerful that the Emperor cannot disregard his disappearance, though I believe he does not love him. So we dare not present ourselves at Agra.”

“What then do you propose to do?” said Abdul Karim.

“We shall disperse,” replied the trooper, “and go each one to different places, distant from Agra, where we shall be safe from pursuit. Indeed, most of the troop have already left this place; I have only remained here to pay my respects to you, after which I shall travel south, and take service with some of the Mahratta chiefs, who are at enmity with Aurungzebe.”

“You are wrong,” exclaimed Abdul Karim, “nothing is to be gained by treachery. Besides, it cannot be supposed that Aurungzebe will permit you to escape. He will pursue you, and it will go hard with you if it should be discovered that you have taken service with his enemies.”

The trooper laughed. “By Allah!” he said, “how can the Emperor pursue us, when we have gone singly, in different directions, throughout the

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length and breadth of Indoustan? You speak of treachery, but your words are foolish. Do you ask me to return to Agra, then, when I know that I shall lose my life if I do so? I have always been a faithful servant to the Emperor; and if it had not been for this accursed misfortune, I should have continued to serve him; but now, my first care must be to secure my own safety."

"What you say is true," answered the jeweller, "and I am not so foolish as to advise you to adhere to Aurungzebe if you can do better for yourself elsewhere. But I fear that you may some day fall into his hands, and if so, he will certainly put you to death."

"Why," says the trooper, "I know that very well; but what else can I do?"

"Is there no chance of capturing this Frank? If you could secure him, and carry him back to Agra, your fortune would be made."

"Nay," said his nephew, "I should rather be ruined, for it is notorious that the Emperor retains some sort of kindness for the Frank, although he permitted him to be disgraced through a fear that he was becoming too powerful; and it is certain that he was very well satisfied to let him escape. Wazir Ali pursued him against the Emperor's wish, being moved to do so by a violent hatred of him. I do not believe that Aurungzebe desires the Frank to be captured; and for my part, if I should chance to see him in this place, I should take good care to look in the opposite direction. No, there is nothing for it but what I have proposed; and I am resolved to leave this place to-day, and take service with the Mahrattas."

I paid no further heed to their conversation, being

transported with delight at what I had heard. I was saved! No longer need I remain in the household of the raffish jeweller, whom I now cordially disliked. I determined that I would immediately make use of my freedom, and depart on my way to Surat.

However, a little consideration showed me that I must wait for a day or so, lest my sudden departure should make the jeweller suspicious. When at last I judged that I might safely propose to leave him, he professed the greatest disappointment, on the score of the affection he felt for me; though I am persuaded his reluctance to part with me was due to a hope that he might yet be able to do some more business with me, and thus cheat me again. But I had no further use for him, and I did not therefore propose to submit to any more of his extortions.

When he found that I was not to be dissuaded from going, he gave over his remonstrances; but he did not yet abandon the hope of deriving some further petty gains in an indirect manner. I am certain that it was with this object that he offered to provide me with a letter to a correspondent and friend of his in the town of Hirabad, who, he said, would willingly accommodate me if I should desire to lie there for a few days. I was perfectly well aware that he would receive a small share in the profits arising from any business that his colleague might transact with me; but I did not choose to let him see that I penetrated his designs, for I considered that it might very possibly be convenient to rest a while at that place; and I therefore agreed to his proposal with an air of gratitude. It was on the most

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cordial terms therefore that I parted with him ; and he would not suffer me to leave him until I had promised that I would lodge with him on my next passing that way.

It was no longer necessary for me to observe any extraordinary precautions ; and I judged that my disguise as a jewel merchant would be sufficient to preserve me if I should have the ill-fortune to fall in with any person belonging to the Court. I therefore determined to travel with as much comfort as befitted the character I had chosen to assume ; and with this view I purchased a couple of fine asses for myself and Nathoo. Thus mounted, we were able to avoid the fatigues and discomforts which we had formerly endured ; and as there was now no need to avoid populous places, we travelled along a good high road, and I permitted myself to enjoy every comfort which the villages through which we passed could afford. Nothing worthy of note befell us on this journey, and after ten days on the road, we arrived at the city of Hirabad, where the jeweller's friend resided ; and here, I resolved, I would pass a week before beginning the last stage of my journey to Surat, which I reckoned would take another ten days or so.

The person to whom I was recommended was named Hafizullah, signifying that he enjoyed the especial favour of heaven. This person, after reading the letter I carried, received me with a great deal of pleasure, which I perceived arose from expectations of gain ; and he desired me to consider his household at my disposal. I thanked him for his hospitality, and signified that I should willingly remain in his house for a few days.

I found that this man, who called himself the

“Protected of Heaven,” was of a very different character from my friend Abdul Karim, whom he resembled only in his perfect willingness to defraud me. He had no pretensions to any especial degree of piety, and by nature he was of a churlish temper, which he only concealed in my case because he expected to make some profit of me. Doubtless Abdul Karim had described in his letter the ease with which he had cheated me, and had urged his friend to make full use of the opportunities which the favour of Allah had sent him. The good Hafizullah had not the least dislike of putting these recommendations into practice, and he began to deal with me with a degree of eagerness which gave way, first to bewilderment, and then to annoyance, when he discovered that he could get no advantage over me. For my part, I had no objection to doing business with him; but as there was not the same reason for securing his favour as there had been in the case of Abdul Karim, I had no mind to allow myself to be defrauded. My knowledge of gems, which I had gained while investing my fortune at Agra, now stood me in good stead, so that although I made several bargains and exchanges with my host, I not only suffered no loss, but I obtained such advantageous terms from him as partly indemnified me for the plundering I had voluntarily undergone at the hands of his friend. I derived considerable amusement from watching the demeanour of my host; his secret disgust at the unprofitable nature of his transactions inclined him to abandon the cordiality with which he had treated me at first; but as he still hoped to make good his failure, he judged it inexpedient to offend me, and he was at a good deal of pains to conceal his mortification.

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By this time I was perfectly easy in my mind, and supposed that I had no reason to apprehend any further dangers. Yet my experience might have taught me that it is precisely at those times when we suppose ourselves to be most secure, that peril is imminent. So it was now; an adventure befell me while I was still in the house of Hafizullah which brought me into the most dreadful straits, and was nearer ruining me than all those dangers which I had successfully passed through. Indeed, had it not been for the devotion and loyalty of my fellow Nathoo I should certainly have been ruined; and here, once more, we perceive that virtue is ever in the end triumphant, for it was only by my benevolence and condescension to him that I had secured that affection which had already preserved my life, and which was now to frustrate the attempts of wicked men to deprive me of my fortune.

It is already known to the reader that the Moguls guard their women with the most jealous care, and will never permit a man to set eyes upon their faces. Indeed, so careful are they in this matter, that a gentleman might live a year in the house of a Mohammedan without ever seeing the female inhabitants, or being informed of their existence save through the medium of hearing. Thus, while I lodged with Abdul Karim, I had never set eyes on so much as the veil of one of his ladies, though I often heard the tinkling of their ankle-rings, and I believe that sometimes, when I sat with my host in the inner courtyard of his house, the women watched me with the greatest curiosity through the lattices which veiled the windows of their apartments.

But although the Mohammedan ladies generally

submit to this treatment with perfect complaisance, there are some of a livelier temper, who do not hesitate to deceive their lords, notwithstanding that they know that they will suffer death if they should be discovered. I had not been a day in the house of Hafizullah before I had reason to suppose that his wife was a lady of a gay disposition, for she contrived to meet me in a passage; and although she affected the greatest disquietude at this accident, and fled with every appearance of modesty, yet her haste was not so great but that she had time to let her veil fall, giving me a glimpse of a countenance sufficiently comely. I was not in the least deceived by her affectation of modesty, and understood perfectly that she desired to engage me in an amorous intrigue; but I was not disposed to afford her the gratification she sought, not only because I remembered the result of my last passage, but because it would ill have become me to render my host so villainous a return for his hospitality.

I therefore affected to be as much shocked as she, and averted my face until she disappeared. This coyness had the effect of making her more venturesome, and on the following night, when I was retiring to my chamber, she again presented herself before me; but this time she did not think it necessary to pretend that the meeting was accidental. Politeness required that I should not pass her by without giving her some kind of greeting; but when I had done this, and would have retired, she detained me by laying her hand upon my sleeve.

This shameless conduct afflicted me with the greatest uneasiness, and I was in terror lest Hafizullah should appear. I represented to her, with

the greatest earnestness, the folly of her conduct, and implored her to retire, lest some misfortune should overtake her. But she assured me that her lord was at that moment occupied in some pressing matters : and she began to be so particular with me, that I was at my wit's end how to be rid of her. However, my good Nathoo approaching at that moment to render me the customary services, I exclaimed, with an appearance of agitation, that we were discovered ; and this plan was successful, for the passage being dark, she could not see who approached, and she took to flight. I was very much disturbed at this occurrence ; indeed, I was in a sufficiently difficult position, for I believed that it would be scarcely more dangerous to yield to her solicitations than to incur her resentment by a refusal, since, in this latter event, she would certainly endeavour to be revenged upon me.

I hoped that the unwillingness I had displayed might have the effect of lessening her eagerness, and perhaps, by arousing in her a sense of female decorum, induce her to discontinue her solicitations. But she continued to plague me, until at last, when she had gone to the length of entering my chamber where I was sleeping, I was obliged to inform her very plainly that her advances were distasteful to me, and to desire her to leave me in peace. At that she flew into a violent rage, and abandoning all self-control, she abused me in the most outrageous manner, calling down upon me every curse which her venomous tongue could utter ; so that I feared she must certainly be overheard. But by some extraordinary chance no one came to interrupt her, and at last, lack of breath obliged her to give

over her abuse, and she left me in peace. As soon as I was alone, I determined that I would leave the house the next morning, for I believed that if I should remain, she would perhaps endeavour to poison me. Indeed, I felt so much apprehension, that I could not rest until I had brought Nathoo into my chamber to keep watch while I slept.

When I awoke in the morning, I was very much surprised to find that he was no longer there; and I could not imagine what could have caused a servant, of whose fidelity I had received so many proofs, to disobey my commands, and desert me when I was in danger. However, a little consideration assured me that he had done no more than go out of the room for a moment; and having quieted my uneasiness in this way, I began to occupy myself in making preparations for my departure, for I was resolved that I would no longer remain in a house where I believed that my life must be in danger.

I made haste to collect the few goods I had with me, and having made a bundle of them, I thrust my hand into my bosom, as I did each day of my life, to assure myself that my little case of jewels was safe. Sure, I came nigh to fainting when I found that it was gone!

I cannot describe the dreadful shock which this discovery occasioned me. A kind of suffocating pang shot through my bosom, and my heart beat so violently that for several moments I was deprived of the use of my senses, and remained unconscious of anything save the fact of my frightful loss. After a short time, however, these distressing sensations left me, and I became sensible once more. My first action was to strip off my clothes, with some

notion that the string which supported the casket around my neck had broken, and allowed it to fall, and I tried to hope that I should certainly find it somewhere in my clothing. But although I took off everything I had on, and shook out even the folds of my turban, I could not discover the precious object. I then began to search the apartment, not neglecting to examine even those places where it seemed impossible that the case could be; but I believe I knew very well that I should not find it, and only undertook the search with a view of relieving, by action, the terrible grief with which I was afflicted.

I had just completed my search without any success, and was about to begin it over again, though I knew I had left no corner unvisited, when Hafizullah rushed suddenly into the apartment, his dress disordered, and his countenance like thunder. He gave me no opportunity of acquainting him with my catastrophe, for no sooner did he set eyes upon me than he burst out on me like a madman, abusing me in the foulest terms, and heaping every kind of vile name upon me.

"Thou dog!" he shrieked. "Thou filthy Turk! Ravisher of harems! Accursed outcast! May the Prophet spit upon thee!" Indeed, I cannot repeat what he said, for he permitted himself the use of the most outrageous language. For my part, I was so taken aback by his violence that I stood gaping, not knowing what he meant; and his agitation was so excessive that it was many minutes before I could find an opportunity of asking him the cause of this outburst.

My question only enraged him the more.

“What!” he cried, “do you ask what you have done! Are you so brazen as to pretend that you have forgotten that last night you attempted to force an entrance into my harem? Is it your habit to reward those who entertain you in this way, that you appear to have forgotten your villainy? Or do you hope to escape by pretending ignorance? May dogs violate your mother’s grave! You shall not escape me, however. O Abdul! Mira Buksh! O Hosein!”

At this outcry a number of servants came running in with staves in their hands, and the uproar was so great that many of the neighbours followed them. In a few moments the apartment was full of persons, and the noise and confusion became indescribable. Hafizullah continued to shriek out his accusations against me, and each newcomer, as soon as he understood what was toward, added his voice to the general clamour, shrieking reproaches and curses at me until I was well-nigh deafened. I began to have an inkling of the truth, that the object of the disturbance was to cover the theft of my stones, which I made no doubt my host had ravished from me. No sooner did this idea occur to me, than I attempted to divert the attention of those present by acquainting them with my loss. “Look you, good people,” I shouted, endeavouring to make myself heard above the din, “I have been robbed. I slept last night with a casket of stones of inestimable value around my neck. This morning I find it gone. Then comes in this man, accusing me of I know not what. I swear by the beard of the Prophet that I am innocent of any designs against him; indeed, it is evident that he——”

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“ Arré ! neighbours, listen to him,” shrieked Hafizullah, drowning my voice with his shrill outcry ; “ he has been robbed ! I tell you he had nothing ; there were no jewels. He makes this pretence to save himself from the vengeance of the faithful. Will you let him escape, friends ? Shall he ravish the harems of believers at his will ? Drive him forth, I say ; for certainly if you do not, there is not a man amongst you but will be dishonoured by him.”

At that his fellows began to press upon me in a very threatening posture. Seeing that they were armed with staves, whereas I had no weapon, and was naked—for indeed, I had not a rag on me, save my turban, which I had been adjusting when Hafizullah burst in upon me—I understood that they would certainly beat me to death ; and being in no mind to perish thus miserably at the hands of a crew of rascally servants, I made a sudden rush, and taking them by surprise, got clear out of the house before they knew what I was at. But the whole rabble came pouring out after me ; and, indeed, I found that I had only escaped from one danger to run into another, for there was a great crowd outside who could not come into the house because of the press. The suddenness of my appearance took them by surprise, and I contrived to struggle through them, bearing down two men in my passage ; but I did not get clear without receiving some very sad blows from sticks and staves. The next instant I was running down an alley, the whole mad crew at my heels. I kept my start of them ; but the whole quarter was roused, and many persons interecepted me, and struck at me as I went past. Those behind

took to casting missiles at me, and many of these hit my body, among them a great ragged fragment of an earthen water-bottle, which took me very cruelly between the shoulders, cutting my back, and knocking the breath out of me. At length a stout fellow put himself in my path, and seeing from his look that he was determined to withstand me, and fearing that he would give me a fall, and thus enable my pursuers to come up with me—for the way was so narrow that I could not dodge him—I picked up a great piece of brick which I spied on the ground, and drove it suddenly into his face. He went down as one dead, and I believe that if he was not killed he was at least very seriously injured.

The most part of the rabble was out of breath by now, and seeing by my action that it would perhaps be dangerous to come to close quarters with me, they halted to raise the man whom I had struck down, and assist him. Only a few of the more determined fellows still pursued me, and presently I left them behind, being still quite fresh, and animated by the fear of what would happen if I should fall into their hands. By means of dodging in and out of the narrow alleys and passages, I soon got quite out of hearing of any sound of pursuit. I had got into a quarter where few persons were about; they stared in astonishment to see me run past them all naked as I was, but none offered to interfere with me, taking me, I suppose, for a madman. For my part, I did not cease running until I got outside the city, and had penetrated some distance into the rough country which lay beyond the walls. Here, finding a thick clump of bushes, I took shelter, and cast myself on the ground, bruised, and panting.

CHAPTER XVI.

I CONTINUE MY JOURNEY IN A MISERABLE CONDITION, BUT FALL IN WITH GOOD SAMARITANS, AND MEET NATHOO AGAIN. HIS FIDELITY AND GOOD SENSE. MY FORTUNE IS RESTORED TO ME. I REACH SURAT, AND DEPART FROM THE INDIES.

It is impossible to conceive a more frightful situation than that in which I now found myself. Everything I had previously endured, the perils which had beset me and the misfortunes which had threatened to overwhelm me, though unequalled in the career of any other gentleman, were as nothing to this final catastrophe. So great was my despair that I became demented, and for a long time I wandered about the country, not knowing or caring whither I went, regardless of the thorns which tore my flesh, heedless of the burning rays of the sun, and forgetful even of my nakedness. In short, I was in a state of despair; and I believe that if my enemies had come upon me then, I should have yielded myself into their hands without any attempt at resistance.

However, even the most dreadful catastrophes cannot change a gentleman's nature, nor rob him of those qualities with which Providence has thought fit to endow him. I now experienced the truth of this; for though I was here bereft of every worldly possession, I was yet the same man who had triumphed over so many difficulties; and the courage and energy which had earned my fortune for me, now urged me to take measures to regain what I had lost.

I sat down in the shade of a clump of bushes, and began to contemplate my situation. But in truth

it was hard to discover any grounds for hope ; and no sooner did I reflect upon the loss of my jewels than despair again threatened to overwhelm me. I burst into a flood of weeping, and moistened the dusty ground with my tears.

But after indulging my grief for a little time, I grew ashamed of such weakness ; and resolutely putting my sorrows out of my mind, I turned to the contemplation of the future. It became apparent to me that henceforth my life must be devoted to one object, the recovery of my jewels ; for I considered that existence would be intolerable to me without the fortune in the acquisition of which I had expended so much toil, and confronted so many dangers. Nothing was now left to me but my bare life ; and since this had no value by itself, I resolved that neither the most insurmountable obstacles nor the most appalling dangers should deter me from the accomplishment of my design.

Sure, 'tis easy for a man of courage to form a resolution of this kind, but it is another matter when he comes to consider how he is to put it into execution. No sooner did I attempt to form a plan, than I perceived the difficulties of what I had undertaken ; and I believe that they would have overwhelmed me, if I had been of a less resolute nature. I could think of no course of action which offered the least chance of success, and the more I pondered, the more hopeless did my position appear.

In short, after sitting for several hours, I had come to no other conclusion than this, that my first efforts must be directed to the relief of my immediate necessities. I was in want of food and cloth-

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ing; I had no friends to look to, and could see no other means of bettering my situation than by begging my way to Surat, and there enlisting the pity of those gentlemen who had assisted me on my first setting out for Agra. And this project gave me another idea: that I might perhaps be able to interest some of the European merchants in my business to such an extent as to persuade them to supply me with a body of fighting-men, whom I could lead back to the city of Hirabad, and with their aid recover my jewels by force. True, this plan did not seem very hopeful, but I could think of no other; and I determined that at least I would carry out the first part of it, and travel as rapidly as I could to Surat.

I now had cause to be thankful for the custom among the Mohammedans of wearing so many yards of cotton stuff around their heads, for I was able to supply my want of clothing by unwinding my turban, and tearing it into two equal lengths, one of which I wound again round my head, while the other provided me with an ample waist-cloth, which is all that is considered necessary by way of clothing for the poorer classes of Indians.

Having arranged this matter, I determined to waste no more time; and rising to my feet, I set out at a guess in what I took to be the direction of the sea. Although I had wandered some way from the city, I had yet not gone so far as to be out of sight of the high road; and presently, catching sight of some clouds of dust, I travelled in that direction, and fell in with a party of poor Indians who were going to Surat. I accosted these fellows, telling them that I was a cultivator, going to visit

some relations ; that I had expended all my substance on the road, and was now looking to the compassion of strangers to enable me to finish my journey. They saw nothing strange in my story ; for, indeed, there are no people more charitable than these poor heathen, and in those villages which lie near to the main routes of travel they are accustomed to support many persons who have no provision for their journey. This party very mercifully offered me some of their simple fare, which I received very gratefully, and one of them, seeing that I was going lame—for, indeed, I had received many grievous blows and was covered with bruises—allowed me to ride in his bullock cart. I could not but be affected by the charity of these ignorant heathen ; and, indeed, in this and some other respects, they are as virtuous as the most enlightened Christian nations.

Now that I had leisure, I began to be excessively surprised at Nathoo's desertion, for such I imagined it was. When I came to consider the matter, I could find no other explanation of his conduct than that he was leagued with the villainous Hafizullah, who had perhaps paid him to keep out of the way. This was what my reason pointed out as the probable explanation ; but I had not lived for thirty-five years in the world without learning that he who relies upon his reason alone, will certainly fall into errors. And sure, I had only to call up in my mind the recollection of that faithful black visage, or to remember some of those affecting scenes when I had put the poor fellow's loyalty to the test, to feel convinced that no man ever had a more trustworthy servant. " No," I cried inwardly, " I will not believe that my worthy Nathoo has shown himself so

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ungrateful to the master who has loaded him with so many favours. It cannot be so; some dreadful accident has befallen him, for nothing else, I am persuaded, would have kept him from me when I was in peril. Who knows; that black-hearted villain Hafizullah may have slain him treacherously, finding that while he lived he could not accomplish his wicked designs against me. Alas! my poor Nathoo: my first, my only faithful friend in this barbarous land; am I never to see thee again? Hast thou also been destroyed by reason of thy too great loyalty to thy master? O miserable man!" I cried, addressing myself, "sure there is some dreadful curse which destroys all those who adhere to thee. Better that thou hadst lost thy jewels—ay, or even thy life—than that a loyal servant had perished because of thee."

In short, I became so firmly persuaded of the truth of my dreadful supposition, that I could not restrain my grief. I gave vent to heavy sighs, and relieved myself by permitting some tears to trickle down my face; so that the good people who had succoured me observed my agitation, and with uncouth gestures began to question me, speaking in a rude lingo which I could scarcely comprehend, but showing, in their dull fashion, so much real tenderness and sympathy, as still further softened my heart, and made my tears flow the faster. "Alas! my good friends," I said, "you see in me one who has been made the target for the most cruel shafts of fortune. There is no calamity which I have not endured, nor any grief with which I am not acquainted. Till this day my woes were shared by one whose faithful companionship had consoled me

in my affliction. Now, alas! Fate has destroyed him also; and having lost him, I am reduced to find comfort in the reflection, that having suffered the ultimate blow of misfortune, no further ills can befall me."

They looked at me in wonder, being of too gross nature to comprehend the misery I suffered. But they showed a disposition to sympathise with me; and indeed, during all the time I was with them, they treated me with respect, and never spared such efforts as occurred to them to make me comfortable. They were kindly folk, but too dull to understand me, and I felt that nothing could assuage my grief save the opportunity to confide my woes to one who could mingle his tears with mine. But, bankrupt in happiness as I was, even this melancholy consolation was denied me.

My worthy friends travelled but slowly, setting their pace by that of their bullocks, who could not make more than a couple of miles to the hour; but they plodded on with such persevering diligence that we covered a good distance each day. My companions were so pitiful and so generous that they would have freely supported me throughout the journey; but I would not suffer this, seeing that they were poor men, and at every halting-place I appealed to some charitable persons to assist me; and so ready were they to do so, that I never went hungry. Sure, 'twas humiliating to a gentleman of my birth and breeding to be reduced to solicit his bread at the hands of naked barbarians; but in truth it needs but little to break down our pride of station, and instead of feeling shame when I begged, I was rather inclined to rejoice that I had occasion to discover the charitable and

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generous disposition of these ignorant heathen. I knew very well that if the inhabitants of the country had been Moguls, I should have fared very ill indeed ; for though they, also, will give readily to those whom they consider to be saints, they look with but little favour upon the poor and unfortunate, being in this respect very like the enlightened peoples of Christendom.

Thus we journeyed day by day ; until one morning a flavour in the air made me draw in a great breath, and I almost shouted with joy when I perceived in it a savour of the ocean. Yet my rejoicing was mingled with sorrow, for I could not but reflect how delightful would have been my sensations if I had come to the shore bearing with me the fruits of my exile. Alas ! I could no longer contemplate, as I had done but lately, an immediate return to the pleasant land of Europe ; nay, I knew that I should be obliged once again to set my face to the East, and retrace that portion of my journey which I had just accomplished ; and that with but slight hopes of regaining the treasure I had lost. But I am a man who never abandons an undertaking ; and I resolved that I would leave my bones to rot in the soil of Indoustan rather than set sail for Europe without having regained at least a portion of my treasure.

We were now about ten miles from Surat, and I began to look out eagerly for faces that might be known to me ; for I experienced such a longing for congenial society as can only be appreciated by those who have lived, as for so many months I had done, among the intrigues and stratagems of a Court. So, as I examined every person we passed, I saw presently on the road ahead the figure of an Indou

which seemed familiar to me. Looking closer, my heart gave such a leap as near deprived me of my senses ; and being unable to wait upon the lazy progress of the waggon I was riding in, I sprang to the earth and ran forward. As I came up with him, the man turned and showed me the honest and homely countenance of that faithful servant whose supposed death had wrung my heart with so much anguish. "What!" I cried, "Nathoo! is it indeed you? Have you escaped the machinations of our foes? Alas! my poor friend, what bitter tears I have shed on your account." And opening my arms, I clasped him to my bosom with the warmest affection.

The poor fellow discovered a delight equal to my own, and what with joy at seeing again his beloved master, and confusion at being thus publicly embraced by a great nobleman, he became so agitated that he could express his feelings in no other way than by yielding to a fit of mingled weeping and laughter. He kneeled in the dusty road at my feet, and in his uncouth fashion, by stroking my legs, and watering my feet with his tears, endeavoured to acquaint me with the joyful agitation which filled his soul. The finishing touch was given to this affecting scene by those rude and kindly fellows who had succoured me ; they crowded around us with joyful shouts, and by their extravagant caperings exhibited the liveliest pleasure at seeing me thus suddenly relieved of my melancholy. I am persuaded that they had not the least comprehension of the cause of my rejoicing, but were moved to this display of emotion by that rough sympathy of which they had already given me so many proofs.

When we had sufficiently indulged our feelings, I

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drew Nathoo away, and going ahead of our friends, began to question him, for I had a lively curiosity to know how he had escaped. "Tell me, my poor fellow," I said, "to what miraculous event do you owe your preservation? For I was certain that you had been destroyed, and I have endured the greatest anguish at the notion."

"Why, Master," he cried, "I supposed that you also had been killed; and, indeed, I had good warrant for the belief, for it was the common report in Hirabad. When I was assured of this I determined to set out at once for Surat, intending to go thence to my village. I have not the least understanding as to how you come to be here."

"That is simple enough," I answered. "When I awoke, and found that you had left me, although I told you to watch by my side, I arose and began to collect my belongings, meaning to depart at once. Very soon I discovered that the accursed villain Hafizullah had robbed me of my jewels; and while I was searching the room, he burst in upon me, accusing me of all sorts of crimes, thinking, no doubt, to cover his theft in this way. He persuaded his servants and neighbours to set upon me and beat me; but I would not permit this, and I escaped from them; and having lost my fortune, and believing that he had murdered you, the better to rob me, I resolved to go to Surat, hoping that I might there enlist a force of men who would assist me to recover my treasure. Indeed, I have sworn never to return to my native land until I have accomplished that end; but I doubt there is but little hope of success, and it is likely that I shall leave my bones in this barbarous country."

At that he burst out a-laughing, and chuckled so heartily that I regarded him with the utmost astonishment. "What!" I cried, "do you laugh at my misfortunes? Has your head been turned by our troubles, that you exhibit this insolent disregard of your master's sorrows?"

"Nay, Master," he said, still laughing, "do not be angry with me, I beseech you. I have here what will certainly turn away your wrath." And thrusting his hand into his bosom, he pulled out a little casket which I knew very well by sight, and handed it to me. "Open it, if you please, Master," he said, "and you will discover that none are missing."

It was indeed as he said; all my pretty diamonds, my pigeon's-blood rubies, the great blue sapphire, worth all the rest together, and the fine Oriental pearls—all were safe. No sooner had I assured myself of this, than I fell upon his neck. "O my good Nathoo!" I exclaimed, "sure, I owe everything to you; for as you formerly preserved my life, and assisted me to regain my liberty, so do you now return to me my fortune which I believed was lost. How can I reward you fittingly? Accept this from me, though sure, it is but a poor reward for such a service," and I held out to him my great sapphire.

"Nay, Master," he said, very contentedly, "if I have your affection and confidence, I require nothing more; and as for that great stone, what would a poor man do with it? Put it up, I beseech you; I do not desire any reward, save to be allowed to continue to serve you."

When I came to think of it afterwards, I was pleased that he had not accepted it, for indeed it was the major part of my fortune, and it would have

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been an odd thing for the servant to be richer than his master. I thought more highly of him for refusing to take advantage of a passing impulse of gratitude; I resolved, however, that I would seek to reward him in a fashion more fitting to his station, by giving him a full measure of my confidence and affection, and retaining him in my service as long as we both should live.

I now desired him to acquaint me with the story of the jewels. "Why, Master," he said, "after you had gone to sleep, I heard the voices of Hafizullah and his wife outside your apartment; and listening to what they said, I understood that they were planning to rob you. Thereupon, I feigned to be asleep, and presently Hafizullah peered in. I heard him return to his wife, and tell her that I was there. 'That is no matter,' she answered, 'send one of the servants to desire his assistance in some trifling matter; and as soon as he is gone, you can slip in and take the jewels. Then, on the morrow, you can accuse the Turk of violating your harem, as we have arranged, and turn him out in disgrace.' 'That is all very well,' returned her husband, 'but what if he should awake while I am removing the jewels?' 'Then there will be nothing for it but to stab him instantly,' said his wife, 'and you can swear you took him in the fact, and slew him in defence of your honour.' 'By Allah!' said Hafizullah, 'a virtuous wife is more precious than great riches. I will do as you say, and send Hosein to entice the Indou from him.' At that I heard him shuffling away.

"You may suppose, Master, that I was in a sweat of fear, when I understood this wicked scheme.

Although I was minded at first to waken you, and warn you of what was afoot, I did not do that, as I feared they might bring assistance and kill you, if you should offer any resistance. I therefore hurriedly stretched out my hand, and took the jewels from your neck. My plan was to answer the invitation I expected, and to leave you. I was then to keep out of the way till morning, lest they should search me also; and after you were awake, I was to return and inform you of the matter, so that you could safely leave the house in the daytime. I reckoned that when they did not find the jewels on you they would do you no hurt, in the hope of finding another opportunity to rob you.

“Presently comes the servant Hosein. ‘O brother,’ he cries, ‘are you there? I beseech you come to my assistance. Thieves are about, and I fear they will attack this house.’

“I went with him with every appearance of readiness, and when we had satisfied ourselves that all was safe, I made believe to return to you, but instead went into hiding. Now when I came back in the morning, I was excessively surprised to find a great uproar. I was in doubt as to whether I should approach and succour you; but I reflected that it was little I could do against so great a crowd, and I thought I might perhaps serve you better by lying hid until I could see you. But after waiting a long time, the clamour died down, and as I could see nothing of you, I asked a man I saw what had passed at the house of Hafizullah. ‘Why,’ he cries, ‘a Turk, that was lodging there, was taken in the act of violating the harem. The neighbours set upon him, and he has been beaten to death, and

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his body thrown to the dogs outside the city.' You may guess, Master, what a state of agitation I now fell into. I inquired of other persons if the tale were true, and they said, Yes, you had been slain. Thereupon I supposed it must be true; and going outside the town, I endeavoured to find your body, to rescue it from the dogs. However, not being able to find it, I reflected what I should do; and being distracted with grief, I could think of nothing better than to go to Surat, and to hand over your jewels to the Governor, or to any friend of yours that I could find; and I resolved that after that I would return to my village, and pass the rest of my life in retirement. That is all I know of the matter," he said. "I perceive that the fellow who told me you were slain was but an idle gossip, and I did wrong to listen to him; but you are to consider, Master, that I was demented with fear and grief on your behalf. There is one thing I do not yet understand: that is why Hafizullah should have driven you forth, rather than wait for some other opportunity to rob you."

"Why," I said, "it is very evident that when he found the jewels were gone, he believed that I suspected him, being inclined thereto by his evil conscience; and supposing that he would have no other chance of succeeding against me, he resolved, by way of revenge, to carry out that scheme which he had planned to cover his theft."

I now comprehended everything which had formerly puzzled me; and being satisfied in these matters, I turned my attention to the future. Recollecting what my thoughts had been but a little time back, how sadly I had approached the ocean

without any hope of being able to set out upon its uneasy bosom, and comparing my present happiness with the misery I then endured, I could no longer restrain my gratitude to that merciful Providence which had turned aside the last and bitterest blow of Fate, and had enabled me to triumph over my enemies. My emotion became so poignant that I could think of no better way of relieving it than by retiring a little distance from the roadside, and kneeling down to offer up a thanksgiving for the wonderful manner in which my merits had at last been rewarded. I derived a great deal of satisfaction and comfort from this exercise, and returning to the roadway, where my good Nathoo was awaiting me, I directed him, in a cheerful voice, to proceed.

As we stepped out together, I kept up a lively flow of conversation, but after a time, I could not but observe that my companion's replies to my remarks were brief and sullen; and that his countenance became more and more melancholy as we went on. I could not imagine any reason for this, and at last I addressed him in a sharp tone. "Tell me, my good fellow," I said, "why do you look so woebegone, when you should rather be filled with rejoicing at my good fortune?"

"Alas! Master," said the faithful fellow, "I am truly glad when I recollect that fortune once more smiles upon you; and I have an additional cause for joy in the reflection that it is through me that you have recovered your jewels. But I cannot forget that we are now close to Surat; and I suppose that you will at once set out upon that great water beyond which lies your Honour's home. For my part, I should not venture to accompany you, for I

am persuaded that the waters are inhabited by the most frightful demons, and other dangerous creatures, who would very likely fear to attack a Frankish nobleman, but who would certainly seize and devour a black man like myself, if I should set foot in their dominions."

The poor fellow's simplicity diverted me to such a degree that I burst into a hearty fit of laughter. "Listen, Nathoo," I cried, still shaking with merriment, "what you say is very true; the ocean is certainly inhabited by some monstrous creatures, such as whales and others, which would very likely devour us, if they could come at us. But we shall travel in a great ship, as large as the Emperor's palace at Agra, and in this we shall be perfectly safe, unless we should be so careless as to fall into the water. As for the demons, no doubt there are some, as on land, but they do not interfere with honest mariners. In short, you have no other peril to fear than one of those violent storms which sometimes arise, and it needs but a stout-hearted captain, with some skill in navigation, to ensure our safety in the most frightful tempest that ever blew. I shall certainly carry you with me, for it would be dangerous to leave you in this country, and besides, I intend to keep you in my service for the rest of your life. Think no more of it therefore; rely upon my protection, and no harm will come to you. Look, my good fellow!" I continued. "There, ahead of us, lies our goal. Those white walls which you see among the trees are the walls of Surat. At last our wanderings are ended! Rejoice with me, my friend, safety and happiness are within our grasp, and no further perils can possibly beset us."

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In fact, we were now but a mile outside the city. I fell into a sober mood as we approached the spot upon which all my hopes had been fixed for so long. I could scarce persuade myself that my perilous journey was indeed ended. My heart swelled with thanksgiving, as I recalled the miraculous way in which I had been preserved, and I resolved to show my gratitude to Providence by living henceforth a life of the most exemplary piety; and particularly by devoting a considerable sum of money to some religious purpose. True, I reflected, I had hoped, at one time, to enter Surat in another manner; not as a fugitive, but as a great nobleman, covered with the glory and honours which I had won at Court. But it would ill become me to cavil at the decrees of Fate; and besides, fugitive as I was, I had earned imperishable glory by my exploits, and nothing could rob me of the fame of these. No gentleman, whatever his merits—and I believe that mine were not small—can look to obtain wealth and honour without enduring some reverses; and for my part, I was very well satisfied with what I had accomplished, and was but little inclined to grumble at the recollection of misfortunes, which, as I believed, were now at an end.

There remains to be told nothing more than the manner of my departure from the Indies. I was received by my good friends at Surat with the utmost cordiality and rejoicing, and with not a little astonishment at my wonderful escape. I found that all my adventures up to the time of my imprisonment were known, and even that some wonderful exploits were attributed to me, which, in fact, had never taken place. I did not, however, consider it proper to contradict these rumours, though I would

not positively confirm them, for some of them might very easily have been true; and indeed they were actually correct in so far as they illustrated the gallantry and wisdom with which I had conducted myself, and there can be no doubt that the mere facts of a story are of much less importance than the spirit which informs them.

However, it was with the utmost surprise that my friends witnessed my return, for they had heard nothing of my escape, and supposed that I must have perished in that frightful dungeon into which I had been cast. I was obliged to repeat the story of my wanderings over and over again, for none of my friends would be satisfied until they had heard it from my own lips, so that before long I grew heartily sick of it. I was treated by all with the utmost kindness; indeed, they endeavoured, by constant feasts and banquets arranged in my honour, to make me forget the frightful sufferings I had undergone.

I discovered that a ship was about to set out for Europe, and in this I engaged passages for myself and Nathoo. The day before we embarked, I spent in paying farewell visits to my friends, and I did not forget to make a handsome present to each, especially to that good padre, whose instructions in the lingo had been so valuable to me. But these private farewells did not satisfy my admirers, and on the following day, when I went with my good Nathoo to the ship, I found a great crowd of them waiting to give me a last greeting. I knew, well enough, and so did they, that I should never see any of these good fellows again, and I could not but be touched at such a mark of affection from men who could not hope to gain anything by their politeness

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to me. I had much ado to get clear from them ; and when at last I tore myself out of their embraces and stepped into the boat to go to the ship, they set up a cheer.

Here, then, ends the narration of my journeyings and adventures in the Indies ; such adventures, I am persuaded, as were never exceeded, or perhaps equalled, even in the wanderings of the fabulous Ulysses, or any other gentleman famous in history. I have related all things exactly as they occurred, and have omitted nothing, save one or two incidents, which, as I have explained, it would not be agreeable to dwell upon.

Although in the land of Indoustan I had endured such frightful hardships, yet I could not leave that strange and barbarous country without regret. Indeed, as I stood on the deck of the ship, and watched the land slip away and grow faint and indistinct, I was not able to refrain from heaving some sighs of regret ; for if my sufferings in the Indies had been so great, yet it was also true that I had risen in this country to a pitch of glory and prosperity such as I had never before attained. Henceforth, I reflected, the history of the Imperial dynasty will be bound up with that of the gallant Frankish noble, whose appearance was so brief and brilliant. The annals of the Court will not be complete without an account of the doings of the famous Cánar Sahib ; and if the Emperor Aurungzebe had no other title to historical fame, he would at least be remembered as the sovereign under whose rule Count O'Connor performed his wonderful feats.

A new Devonshire Novel by the Author of
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Mr. John Trevena's rise to a high position among West Country novelists has been rapid indeed. If "A Pixy in Petticoats" revealed a talent for romance, combined with the nicest vein of rustic humour, "Arminel of the West" proved that the author was fully equal to the task of writing a really powerful novel. In his latest work he has advanced still farther, for there has been no more artistic representation of the men and women, far from simple in many respects, yet in others primitive to a degree, who dwell in the heart of Devon. When a district possesses chroniclers like Mr. Trevena, it is easy to explain why holiday makers are year by year evincing a disposition to leave the beaten tracks in their rambles.

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AUGUST, 1907.

"THE VIPER OF MILAN" MADE ITS AUTHOR KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD.

ENGLAND—The Spectator.—"For so young a writer Miss Bowen has a remarkable sense of style, which, taken in conjunction with her energy and imaginative power makes her a welcome recruit to the ranks of imaginative romancers."

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AMERICA—The New York Times.—"This sounds like extravagant praise, but it will be the exceptional person who will not be aroused to rapturous enthusiasm by Miss Bowen's work. The historical novel, had it apparently died the final death, but Miss Bowen's manner of approaching its difficulties would seem to promise a new era in its existence. . . . She has certainly triumphed along unconventional lines."

It is no exaggeration to say that Marjorie Bowen's first novel, "The Viper of Milan," was welcomed throughout the English-speaking world as a romance of quite exceptional power and distinction. Her second book, "The Glen o' Weeping," is now ready, and bids fair to out rival the popularity of its predecessor. Any Bookseller or Library should be able to supply copies.

"THE GLEN O' WEEPING," by Marjorie Bowen.

Fiction in Preparation for Autumn Season, 1907.

The Rainy Day. Tales from the Great City. By the Author of "A London Girl," etc.

(Ready Aug. 14.) **3s. 6d.**

The anonymous author of *Tales from the Great City* has already attained to high repute by means of "A London Girl" and "Closed Doors," in both of which his unrelenting pen exposed the depths of misery that underlie the so-called "Life of Pleasure." In his latest work, "The Rainy Day," the author turns his attention to the middle-class suburb as it existed in the eighties of last century, before the local idea was completely absorbed by the spirit of metropolitanism. To the novel reader who demands a good story, and to the student of social phenomena, "The Rainy Day" can be recommended with equal confidence.

Mr. Meyer's Pupil. By EVA LATHBURY. With coloured frontispiece.

(Ready Aug. 28.) **6s.**

Ever since the foundation of the publishing house of Alston Rivers, a persistent endeavour has been made to discover new authors, and to appreciate how successful has been the quest a mere glance at the firm's publications will suffice. In introducing Miss Eva Lathbury to readers of fiction, the publisher can but hope that he is not too sanguine in anticipating that the author's lively wit and whimsical outlook on the life of the leisured classes will meet with the reception which, in his opinion, it deserves. The author's style should at least escape the charge of being derivative. The volume is rendered still more attractive by means of a coloured frontispiece by Mr. R. Pannett.

The Adventures of Count O'Connor. By HENRY STACE. (Ready middle September.) **6s.**

A new novel writer of exceptional promise is always interesting, but when he makes his bow equipped with a story that is absolutely fresh, his chances of success are all the greater. In "The Adventures of Count O'Connor" at the Court of the Great Mogul, the author has found a theme exactly fitted to his delightful humour and vivacity. No historian has ever furnished a more convincing idea of the crafty Aurangzeb and his egregious court. The escapades of the hero, as the self-dubbed Irish "Count," may worthily be styled, are of the most extraordinary description, and are recounted so racily, that the reader can barely pause to question his veracity. The "Count's" journey from Agra to Surat is packed with incident, and though gruesome events are chronicled, the writer's innate lightheartedness completely divests them of horror.

The Lord of Latimer Street. By JANE WARDLE. Author of "The Artistic Temperament."

(Ready end Sept.) **6s.**

In the early month of the year Miss Wardle's first book made a sensation both in the literary circles and with the general public, it being a matter of common wonder how such a young lady, as she was understood to be, could have such a grasp of the artistic, commercial, and suburban worlds. That Miss Wardle would be heard of again was prophesied by more than one critic, and there seems every prospect of "The Lord of Latimer Street" going far to substantiate her claim to recognition as a writer of marked originality. As may be conjectured from the title Miss Wardle's new book is concerned with characters of more lofty station than was the type depicted in "The Artistic Temperament." The same whimsical humour, however, pervades the story, which, it is to be hoped, is sufficiently characteristic of the author to allay any suspicion on the part of critics as to a concealment of identity.

The Meddler. By H. DE VERE STACPOOLE and W. A. BRYCE. With 8 illustrations and frontispiece.

(Ready middle Sept.) 8s.

Those who affect the lighter side of literature have never been in such need of thoroughly amusing books as during the last year or two, and with the host of requests for "something with a laugh on every page," the bookseller has been powerless to comply. The publication of "The Meddler" is at least one step in the right direction; it is full of fun of the lightest, healthiest sort. The artist, too, has entered thoroughly into the spirit of a book which goes with a merry swing from start to finish.

The Turn of the Balance. By BRAND WHITLOCK.
(Ready Aug. 28.) 6s.

Though it is true that many novels that have had a huge vogue in America meet with a comparatively frigid reception on this side of the Atlantic, it is equally true that when once an American book hits the British taste, the impression it leaves is far more lasting than that of the average run of publication. "The Turn of the Balance" is the work of a realist who, perhaps inspired originally by the arch-realist, Mr. Howett, has attained a realism that places him in a position entirely his own. "The Turn of the Balance," says Mr. Upton Sinclair, author of "The Jungle," "is an extraordinary piece of work. It is as true as life itself, and yet irresistible in its grip upon the reader. I know nothing with which to compare it, except Tolstoy's 'Resurrection.'"

The title gives a ready clue to the purpose of the book. "The Turn of the Balance" is a searching and sweeping arraignment of American modes of administering justice. The indictment is set forth in detail and particularity acquired through years of living at first-hand contact with the sufferers from man's inhumanity to man. The law itself is put on trial here, and all who reach from under the law's mantle black bands to crush their fellows with injustice.

On the one hand is the evil array of the law's oppression: courts of every degree, civil and criminal, federal and state; judges, corrupt, incompetent or trivial, preening themselves in a silly show of solemn dignity, capitulating to the rich and inflicting upon the helpless punishments out of all proportion to the offence; prosecutors with hearts gradually hardened; lawyers urged by petty ambitions and meretricious aims; clerks, sheriffs, bailiffs and deputies, brutalised and contemptuous; police and detectives who make it their business to secure conviction, whether the convicted be innocent or guilty; workhouse, jail, and penitentiary, riddled with graft, vile with vermin, sheltering horrors of torture that the Inquisition would not have blushed to own.

In this phase "The Turn of the Balance" is an American 'Never too Late to Mend.'

On the other hand is the whole range of the underworld, the world of poverty and crime, where women and men, whom we view with Pharisaical aloofness, live lives not so essentially different from our own. The lives of these men and women, their acts, feelings, friendships, ideals, diversions and hardships, their philosophy, their loyalty, their courage, their methods of work, their rendezvous, their elaborate slang, are set forth with an unexampled fulness, a unique familiarity, a magnificent sympathy.

In this phase "The Turn of the Balance" is an American 'Les Miserables.'

But Brand Whitlock's great book is more than an arraignment of the judicial army and more than an epic of the underworld. It brings terrible charges against society. It charges society with making the reformation of a criminal impossible and absurd. It charges society with breeding in the upper class a luxurious indifference to all the interests of the lower. It charges society with rendering its organised charities futile, foolish, and frivolous. It charges society with fostering in its Church forgetfulness of the all-inclusive love of the Divine Founder.

It charges society with homicidal fury in the revenge of murder, inspired by a debased and sensational press.

It will be gathered that "The Turn of the Balance" is far more than a novel to put on your library list and return after perusal. It is a book for your bookshelf, to be read again and again.

Furze the Cruel. By JOHN TREVENA. Author of "Arminel of the West," etc. (Ready end Sept.) **6s.**

Mr. John Trevena's rise to a high position among West Country novelists has been rapid indeed. If "A Pixy in Petticoats" revealed a talent for romance, combined with the nicest vein of rustic humour, "Arminel of the West" proved that the author was fully equal to the task of writing a really powerful novel. In his latest work he has advanced still farther, for there has been no more artistic representation of the men and women, far from simple in many respects, yet in others primitive to a degree, who dwell in the heart of Devon. When a district possesses chroniclers like Mr. Trevena, it is easy to explain why holiday makers are year by year evincing a disposition to leave the beaten tracks in their rambles.

Gift Books for Autumn Publication.

(See also page 13 for Gift Books.)

Sarah the Valiant. By THEODORA WILSON-WILSON. Author of "The Magic Jujubes," "A Navy from King's," etc. With 8 illustrations. **5s.**

The Runaways. By RAYMOND JACBERNS. Author of "The New Pupil," etc. With 6 illustrations. **5s.**

There is no present that is more acceptable to a girl than a nice book; yet how difficult it is to find exactly the right thing! There are, of course, dozens of books published every autumn that are harmless enough, and will, very possibly, afford a certain amount of pleasure for the moment to the average young lady—but the perfect book for girls must have so many qualities, mostly negative, no doubt, but some positive as well. The perfect girl's book should not contain any mention of "things" (as Mr. Ford Madox Hueffer would say). Well, there are plenty that do not, but where such books fall short of perfection is that "grown-ups" find them dreadfully tedious to read aloud in the family circle. That is what is wanted; a book that will interest and amuse everybody; if it comes up to that requirement it is certain to interest and amuse girls.

Here are two books that everybody will like: "Sarah the Valiant," by Theodora Wilson-Wilson, is full of entertainment; the characters all live, and though pathos is never obtruded, the story is full of the tenderness of which the author has already shown herself to be possessed in the "Magic Jujubes." Raymond Jacberns's "The Runaways" is equally certain to please. So graphically are the young people's wanderings described, that the staidest of aunts must feel the vagabond spirit thrill within her, though the common-sense denouement of the story can be relied on as an infallible moral antidote. Both books are beautifully illustrated, and the titles are worth remembering: "Sarah the Valiant" and "The Runaways."

General Literature for Autumn Publication.

The Book of Living Poets. Edited by WALTER JERROLD. Crown 8vo. (Ready Oct.) **7s. 6d. net.**

It has been the fashion in literary circles of late to aver that modern poetry suffers neglect at the hand of the publisher. That contemporary verse is not altogether unpatronised, however. Mr. Alston Rivers has already proved by the series of little volumes, all the work of living authors, that he has issued recently with success. That effort is now being followed up by a charming volume of upwards of 400 pages, beautifully bound and printed, entitled, "The Book of Living Poets." Every contemporary poet of distinction, from whose pen verse has been recently published, is represented; to name only a few, Swinburne, Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, and Alfred Noyes.

The Spirit of the People. By FORD MADDOX HUEFFER. (Ready Sept.) 5s. net.

Mr. Ford Maddox Hueffer has been aptly described by a well-known critic as one of the most interesting figures among present-day writers. Whether as a poet or as a writer of historical romance, he has always commanded respect, and the appearance of a new work in either direction is regarded as a literary event. It was, however, with "The Soul of London" and its companion volume, "The Heart of the Country," that the critics' pens were at their busiest, and in his advertisement to the latter book, the author made it known that a third "small projection of a view of modern life" might shortly be expected. This promise is now to be redeemed by the imminent publication of "The Spirit of the People."

To vaunt the new and concluding volume of the series as more charming than its predecessors would be as absurd as it would be disingenuous. It may, however, be mentioned that the value of "The Spirit of the People" is peculiar. England, both as regards life in the metropolis and rural districts, has been subjected to the considerations of writers of almost every nationality. The English spirit has been diagnosed and analysed often enough. What makes Mr. Hueffer's new book so interesting is that it is written by an Englishman in one sense; yet, in another sense, scarcely an Englishman. The author's training has not been that of the average youth of the Established Church; yet the book is instinct with reverence and affection for that Church. Unquestionably the reader will find the many pages devoted to the religious aspect of the English spirit highly instructive; though, in lighter vein, when dealing with Englishmen's sense of the proprieties, of their devotion to sports, and their hundred other peculiarities, the author is no less engaging. From these remarks it will be judged that "The Spirit of the People" makes a wide appeal; its genial bonhomie and tolerance should ensure a favourable hearing.

In Search of the Western Sea. By LAWRENCE J. BURPEE. With large coloured map and numerous illustrations. Demy 8vo. (Ready Oct.) 16s. net.

Mr. Burpee's volume, "In Search of the Western Sea," deals with some of the most exciting and most romantic episodes in the history of the exploration of North America. Mr. Burpee is librarian of the Public Library, Ottawa, and has had exceptional opportunities of obtaining access to original documents, the information contained in which has never before been published. For long after it was discovered that the North-West Passage could never be available as a route to the Pacific and to Eastern Asia, the belief was entertained that it might be possible by means of the great waterways and great lakes which cover Canada and the North United States to obtain a passage into the Pacific. It is the search for this passage with which Mr. Burpee's volume is largely concerned, but in connection with that, he covers much other ground dealing with the exploration of the great rivers running into the Arctic Basin on the one hand and into the Pacific on the other; so that the volume is really an adequate, interesting, and trustworthy history of the exploration of the whole of Western Canada and the Northern United States. It is in this respect a companion to Dr. Dawson's volume on "The Basin of the St. Lawrence." Besides a complete large map by Bartholomew of Central and Western Canada, it contains reproductions of various old contemporary maps and is profusely furnished with illustrations, many of them from contemporary records, while others are from photographs taken for the purpose. The volume will be found one of the most interesting narratives of exploration that have been published for many years.

The Slaves of Belgium. By ST. A. HARMER. 1s. net.

The pitiable case of King Leopold's subjects in the Congo has distracted attention from the condition of his Belgian lieges. Mr. Harmer is not only intimate with Belgian affairs; he has written from personal observation of the labouring classes and their environments in every district of the thickly populated little kingdom. What he has to say is set down in no sensational spirit; the book is rather a sober and serious exposition which should be read and read again by all who are earnestly concerned in the welfare of the universe.

The Siege of the North Pole. DR. FRIDTJOF NANSEN. In Preparation. 16s. net.

Thomas Hood : His Life and Times. By WALTER JERROLD. Illustrated. Demy 8vo. (Ready Sept.) **16s. net.**

Though over sixty years have now elapsed since the death of Thomas Hood, it is not a little strange that only one attempt has been made to tell the story of his life with any fulness. The fate of his contemporaries, and indeed many successors, has not been Thomas Hood's: he is still regarded as a writer of comic verse that is above all competitors; his share in the history of modern letters cannot be minimised; and his personality was unusually attractive and lovable. Yet the "Memorials of Thomas Hood," prepared by his son and daughter, and published in 1860, re-issued ten years later with some excisions and with but few new features, is the only sustained chronicle to which hitherto the enquirer has been able to resort. Even in the later edition the first thirty-five years of Hood's short life were dismissed in sixty-seven pages, as against 400 pages devoted to his last eleven years, while much that is inaccurate is to be noticed throughout those earlier pages. It was, therefore, a duty incumbent upon the Republic of Letters that some one, well equipped, should take up the task of writing a complete biography; that Mr. Walter Jerrold was well qualified for the undertaking has already been made sufficiently evident. The book is beautifully produced, with suitable illustrations, including coloured plates and a photogravure plate.

The Chase of the Wild Red Deer. By CHARLES PALK COLLYNS. With coloured frontispiece. (Ready Oct.) **5s. net.**

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